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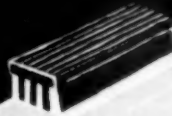
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The Reading Teacher



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Controversial Issues Relating to Reading

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ICIRI

The Reading Teacher

Vol. 8, No. 4

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Contents

	Page
CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES RELATING TO READING (an introduction)—William S. Gray.....	195
CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES RELATING TO WORD PERCEPTION—A. Sterl Artley	196
COMMENTS ON DR. ARTLEY'S ADDRESS—Helen M. Robinson	200
DIRECT VERSUS INCIDENTAL TEACHING OF READING BEYOND THE PRIMARY GRADES—William Kottmeyer	202
REPLY TO DR. KOTTMAYER'S ADDRESS—Paul Witty	206
CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES RELATING TO READING IN THE CURRICULAR AREAS—Gertrude Whipple	208
RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF READING SKILLS NEEDED IN CONTENT AREAS—Ernest Horn	212
CLASSROOM LIBRARIES ARE NOT ENOUGH—Agnes Krarup	215
CAN WE IMPROVE READING BY USING MECHANICAL DEVICES—William D. Sheldon.....	219
IT PAYS TO GET READY TO READ—Eleanor M. Johnson	224
PARENTS LEARN ABOUT FIRST-GRADE READING—Dolores Elinsky, Mary E. Farrell, and M. Dorothy Penn	227
WHAT RESEARCH SAYS TO THE TEACHER OF READING—READING READINESS—Helen M. Robinson	235
WHAT OTHER MAGAZINES ARE SAYING ABOUT THE TEACHING OF READING—Muriel Potter..	239
READING IN THE SCIENCE FIELD—Nancy Larrick.	245
NEWS OF LOCAL COUNCILS—Josephine Tronsberg	249

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Coordinator AND PLANNER of this series of discussions on controversial issues relating to reading is Dr. William S. Gray, of the University of Chicago. Dr. Gray has had a long and distinguished career as an educator and specialist in reading instruction. He is considered by many as dean of reading instruction in the United States and Canada, as well as in many countries abroad. He has travelled extensively as an adviser on educational problems.

Dr. Gray has been a prolific writer of textbooks, monographs, and magazine articles on the teaching of reading. One of his first professional books is *READING INTERESTS AND HABITS OF ADULTS*, which appeared in 1929. He was a pioneer on the problem of readability of reading materials when, in 1935, he published the ever-popular book, *WHAT MAKES A BOOK READABLE*. His most recent books are: *READING IN GENERAL EDUCATION* and *ON THEIR OWN IN READING*.

The name Gray and research in reading are almost synonymous. His yearly reviews on research in reading, which appear in the *JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH*, have been very helpful to teachers.

As is well known, Dr. Gray is the author of a very popular series of children's basic readers. His knowledge of child development, children's interests, and the way children learn have been reflected in all writing for children which he supervises.

We are indeed fortunate in having Dr. Gray plan this year's programs. For all meetings he has secured the services of outstanding experts in the various phases of reading instruction. The addresses which were delivered at the St. Louis meeting of the American Association of School Administrators are featured in this issue of the magazine.

There are two other articles in the journal which can be classified as controversial. Miss Agnes Krarup makes a plea for centralized libraries and Dr. William D. Sheldon discusses the use and misuse of mechanical devices in the teaching of reading.

Two articles of general interest are included. Miss Eleanor M. Johnson has written a very practical article on the importance of getting ready to read. A group of teachers explain what they did to get parents to understand the reading program in their school.

Helen M. Robinson completes her series of research articles. She cites some important implications for teachers on the subject of reading readiness. Dr. Muriel Potter reviews the latest articles on reading. And Miss Nancy Lar-rick writes on the use of science books.

This is the last issue for the school-year. Plans have already been made for a series of interesting features for next fall. We know you will want to read the many interesting articles which are coming.

J. ALLEN FIGUREL, Editor

And Now . . .

To Introduce the Feature Theme:

Controversial Issues Relating to Reading

ONE of the valuable services which ICIRI can render is to provide opportunity for public discussions of vital problems relating to reading. This year in planning programs to be held in conjunction with the St. Louis and Cleveland meetings of the American Association of School Administrators, the Executive Board approved the plan of focusing attention on a series of controversial issues. It was believed that through carefully planned discussions and the pooling of judgments thinking concerning certain issues where doubt and confusion exist today in some centers could be greatly clarified.

As a preliminary step in planning for these meetings a study was made of the proposals for improving reading which appeared in the symposium entitled *UNSOLVED PROBLEMS IN READING* in the October and November, 1954 issues of *ELEMENTARY ENGLISH*. Many challenging proposals were made of which the following are examples: better adjustment of time for beginning reading with special reference to bright children; the promotion of continuous growth on the part of each child from the point attained at time of entrance, in harmony with his maturation level, interests, and developmental needs; the establishment of improved perceptual and word recognition skills; the development of broad concepts and an enlarged meaning vocabulary; the promotion of higher level of comprehension, that is a deeper and more penetrating grasp of meaning; the better teaching of the reading and study skills needed in each content field; the need for a better understanding of the possible effects of reading and ways of attaining them. These and other constructive suggestions indicate the many ways in which improvement is urgently needed today.

In discussing the unsolved problems which we face today, the authors of the symposium identified a number of controversial issues. Those which the committee believed merit immediate attention related to "the development of perceptual and word recognition skills"; "the need for systematic versual incidental instruction in reading beyond the primary grades," and "the division of responsibility in developing the understandings and skills involved in effective reading and study in content fields." In presenting these topics it seemed advisable to ask someone who was particularly capable in each field to present a brief but carefully prepared analysis of each problem. This was done in sufficient time to send it to a second person in advance of the meeting, who was asked to lead in the discussion of the paper. Following the two presentations the problem was open for discussion from the floor. The material that follows summarizes somewhat fully the discussions of the three issues at the St. Louis meeting on Monday, February 28, 1955.

WILLIAM S. GRAY

Controversial Issues Relating To Word Perception

by A. STERL ARTLEY

● UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI

OF ALL THE ISSUES facing teachers of reading, it is safe to say that none is so controversial as that of word perception, and we might add, so surrounded with emotional overtones. In the last two decades there have been a number of articles written on the subject. Because in many cases the issues and the basic assumptions behind them have not been clear, much of the writing has resulted in confusion rather than clarification.

It is my intent this afternoon, in the limited time available, to look at three problems related to word perception and the word perception program. In each case I shall try to identify and briefly discuss the issues involved. In doing so I have discovered that it is impossible to conceal my own point of view.

Word Perception and Goals Of Reading Instruction

The first issue has to do with the relation of the word perception program to the over-all goals of reading instruction. In question form we would state it as follows: What part of the total reading program shall be given over to the teaching of sight words and to the development of independent techniques of word perception?

A point of view implicit in a number of reading programs is that instruction in word perception is the most important part of the program.

In fact the teaching of reading is the teaching of word recognition, with only a modicum of attention directed to other goals of instruction. Consequently, we find much of the program given over to word drill, word games, separate phonics periods, and word recognition activities divorced from functional reading. A great deal of the instructional material is unrelated to story content, being made up of lists of words and nonsense syllables used for the purpose of drill.

This type of program is characterized by a certain supplementary phonics drill book of some 125 pages where only a total of eight pages is given over to connected (?) discourse. Though presumably built for the primary grades the drill words that are supplied are those that are completely foreign to the vocabulary of a typical primary child. In fact, one word isn't even in the dictionary. Another program, almost exclusively phonics in nature, claims that a first grader can be taught to recognize words commonly found on fifth-grade word lists. By the amount of drill material provided, and the recommended amount of time the teacher is supposed to give these materials apart from reading, the validity of this claim would not be doubted. But what virtue is attached to an average first grader learning to pronounce fifth-grade words? What a terrific price we ask children to pay for their whistle.

The opposing point of view holds to the idea that the word perception program is merely a *part* of the total reading program—an important part, let there be no doubt about that, but a part that serves as a *means* to interpretation rather than as an *end* of reading instruction. This point of view is held by Gray and others who conceive of the total interpretative act as being made up of the identifiable components of word perception, comprehension, reaction, and integration. Word perception is then a part of the total act of reading.

This being true the word perception program must be closely integrated with the reading act, not set apart in separate instructional periods, nor handled through extraneous drill materials. The words from which recognition principles are inductively derived are those the child has met in his daily reading. As he acquires a new perception skill he applies it directly to new words which he meets in his daily reading. Emphasis throughout is on interpretation, with perception skills serving that end. Otherwise, the reader runs the risk of being able to "phonics his way through any word," but unable to derive or to react to the author's meaning.

Content of Word Perception Program

The second issue I should like to discuss has to do with the content of the word perception program. In what areas shall we attempt to develop word perception skills and abilities? On this issue the lines are clearly drawn between those who would limit the pro-

gram to a single area, namely phonics, and those who would advocate the development of abilities in several areas, such as context, structural analysis, and the use of the dictionary.

Within the last year, in several popular magazines, have appeared articles extolling the merits of the phonics approach to reading instruction. One of the writers contends that the teaching of reading is simple. Since reading means getting meaning from certain combinations of letters all the teacher needs to do is to teach the child what each letter stands for and he will be able to read. He adds that this is the "natural system" of learning to read, and that the "ancient Egyptians . . . the Romans . . . Germans . . . Estonians . . . and Abyssinians" learned to read that way.

Though we may smile at these broad and sweeping generalizations, there are those who believe that a return to the methods and content in vogue at the turn of the century would be the solution to all our reading problems. The number of so-called "phonetic systems" on display at the bookstands at professional meetings is mute testimony to the belief of many in the philosophy of the old oaken bucket.

The point of view most widely accepted by reputable reading people today—Gates, Gray, Witty, Durrell, Betts, and others is that phonics is merely one of several methods that the child may use to unlock words. This contention gets its strength from basic research done in the late 30's and early 40's by Tate, Tiffin and McKinnis, Russell, and others who con-

clude:

- Phonics is only one method of word recognition.
- Phonics instruction should be closely integrated with purposeful reading.
- Though intensive phonics instruction may improve ability to recognize words, it makes little contribution to silent reading comprehension.

There is not a series of basic materials on the market today that does not include instruction in phonics, but it is functional phonics, not a superimposed system of reading. It is closely integrated with meaningful reading, and taught in close conjunction with other procedures such as context clues, structural clues, and word-form clues. The basis for this practice rests in the following assumptions:

- English is a language that follows no lawful pattern of pronunciation as German or Spanish. Consequently, no single method of word attack can be depended upon. This becomes increasingly obvious as the reader meets more involved polysyllabic words.
- Whereas one can sound out simple three- and four-letter words with only a minimum loss of time, one's rate of perception is slowed down materially as he attempts to use a highly synthetic approach on more involved words.
- Since meaning is the primary consideration, those devices which give the child clues to meaning as well as to form are

of primary value—hence, the importance of context clues, structural analysis, (emphasizing root elements, prefixes, suffixes, inflectional endings, etc.), and the dictionary.

True independence in reading is attained when the child can with dispatch and confidence unlock any word he meets on his own terms, be it short or long, simple or complex.

The Teaching of Word Perception Skills

The last issue I propose to discuss is somewhat related to the preceding one. Assuming that we are committed to the development of a versatility of word attack by equipping the child with skills, abilities, and understandings in several methods of word perception, the question then arises as to how this program shall be carried out. Shall one begin by teaching the sounds of the elements, leading eventually into the synthesis of the word whole from known components, or shall one begin with sight words, withholding until later the teaching or analytical procedures?

A writer in one of the popular articles to which I have already alluded, would begin his program by teaching the sounds of the letters. He says, "As soon as you switch to the common sense method of teaching the sounds of the letters, you can give them a little primer, and then proceed immediately to anything from this magazine to *Treasure Island*." Let us examine this contention critically. Reading is the process of creating meaning from word symbols. It must be a

meaningful experience, an interesting, vital experience. But what meaningful experience can be associated with the sounds of *m*, or *b*, or *st*, or any other auditory or visual component? Possibly the most important thing the teacher can do with beginning children is *to help them develop a favorable attitude toward reading*. From the time she begins, reading must be an interesting, pleasurable, meaningful experience. It is difficult to see how the teaching of meaningless, discrete sounds or elements, and "doing phonetic gymnastics" can go very far toward developing this essential attitude.

Those who understand that potency of motivation in the learning process insist that the initial contract with reading be through meaningful words, *perceived as wholes*, not as parts. Because the child's concern is with the meaningful unit he comes to see that reading is fun—a pleasurable experience. Some would take issue with me on this point and say that we need not be concerned with making reading fun. They contend that children might as well learn early that learning to read is a matter of blood, sweat, and tears. Yet, I will defend to the last the point that unless children see early that reading is an avenue to new and exciting experiences they are not going to turn to it in their free time nor use it as a source of information. They will become the avid readers of comic books and viewers of television. They will also be the ones who haunt the reading clinics because they see no point and purpose to an uninteresting activity.

Phonics Should be Functional

As I have already pointed out, there is a place for phonics as well as other procedures of word perception, but they should not take precedence over the primary function of reading which is to create meaning. They should be introduced after a basic stock of sight words has been established. This basic stock of sight words serves two purposes: first, that of developing desirable attitudes toward reading; and second, that of providing the stock-in-trade for the inductive development of generalizations about sounds, endings, prefixes, similar and dissimilar elements, etc. After these principles have been developed from the basic stock of sight words they may then be applied to new words. The young reader is on his own in reading. It seems to me this is sound psychology.

Furthermore, research shows that a typical child should have a mental age of seven before phonics generalizations can be meaningfully learned and applied. As a result, much of this work is reserved for the second year and beyond. However, this does not preclude a rich and meaningful program in readiness for phonics and structural analysis. Of course, it is during this time that the basic stock of sight words is being developed.

I regret that time does not permit the discussion of other controversial issues related to word perception. However, I am quite sure that they will be live issues next year, or five years from now. There's something about word perception that makes it a perennial conversation topic.

Comments on Dr. Artley's Address

by HELEN M. ROBINSON

● UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

IMPLICIT in the previous paper is the fact that some modes of word perception must be taught. Furthermore, in the English language particularly, no single method for developing word perception may be relied upon entirely.

In addition to the issues presented previously, others should be noted. For example, if picture clues, phonics, structural analysis, content clues, and the dictionary are essential to accurate and rapid word perception, when and how shall each be introduced, stressed, and refined? Is there evidence to support the conclusion that overemphasis on whole words without sufficient attention to detail has been basic to reading retardation among many pupils? When and how shall informal and direct instruction in word perception begin? And, finally, recognizing individual differences among children, are some unable to profit from initial instruction using the "whole" method? Space permits a brief discussion of only the last two controversial issues.

Readiness for Perception Skills

The first issue is whether the majority of children are ready to profit by instruction in word perception at age five, six, or seven. Morphett and Washburn¹ delayed the teaching of

reading with an experimental group until the middle of second grade and found that these pupils made greater progress in reading than a control group who began at first grade. This report raised many questions in the minds of educators, but in American schools, children usually are started in word perception at age six.

However, the practice in several European countries is to begin instruction in word perception at age five. For example, the Scottish Council for Research in Education² reported evidence that Scottish children with a mental age of five years or more make satisfactory progress in learning to read. In fact, Gates pointed out recently that if reading is to compete with radio and television in this country, careful study should be made to determine whether children can begin to read earlier, perhaps about age four.

In these changing times we must not be satisfied with tradition. We need fresh evidence to guide the schools in deciding when and how to begin teaching word perception.

Differences in Learning to Perceive Words

A second controversial issue deals with individual differences among children in the way they learn to perceive words. About twenty years ago,

¹Mabel Vogel Morphett and Carlton Washburn, "When Should Children Begin to Read", *Elementary School Journal*, XXXI (March, 1931) 496-508.

²Great Britain, Scottish Council for Research in Education. *Studies in Reading*, Vol. II, University of London, Ltd. London, 1960, p. 64.

Fendrick³ reported a study of visual characteristics of good and poor readers. He concluded that children with visual difficulties were more likely to succeed in reading if they were taught by a phonetic method. He also found that good readers performed more efficiently on some tests of visual perception.

Recently Goins⁴ found that first-grade pupils who tended to see larger units on tests of visual perception also learned to read satisfactorily. Conversely, those who attended to details made unsatisfactory progress, when the whole-word-method of instruction was employed. A similar trend has been reported by several investigators who used the Rorschach test.

In each instance, the majority of pupils learn to read by the whole-word approach. But the implications are clear that certain pupils do not learn readily by that method. This evidence does not suggest that schools abandon their current methods of teaching, but rather that teachers need to be sufficiently flexible to adapt instructional methods to the characteristics of individual learners.

• • •

Gray's Comments

Dr. Gray commented, saying, "This same question has been up for discussion in England during the past year. In the *London Times* in their

³Paul Fendrick, *Visual Characteristics of Poor Readers*, Teachers College Contributions to Education, No. 656. New York: Columbia University, 1955.

⁴Jean Turner Goins, "Visual Perceptual Abilities and Tachistoscopic Training Related to Reading Progress," Unpublished Doctor's dissertation, Department of Education, University of Chicago, 1953.

educational section during the spring of last year, this issue was very hotly debated. The final consideration of the question was to the effect that there was no question as to the matter of drilling boys and girls to recognize words. The 'when' and 'how' seemed to be the major questions." "It seems to me," continued Dr. Gray, "that this question is where most of the differences of opinion lie." He continued saying that it is necessary to proceed gradually until your boys and girls have obtained a degree of understanding which makes for a relationship of sounds and meaning.

• • •

I. C. I. R. I.

THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE
IMPROVEMENT OF READING INSTRUCTION

Open Meeting

Monday, April 4, at 2:30 P. M.
Rainbow Room, Carter Hotel

PRESIDING:

WILLIAM S. GRAY

GREETINGS:

MARGARET A. ROBINSON, *President*

THEME:

Controversial Issues Relating to

1. Development of Word-Perception Skills.
2. Basic Reading Instruction Beyond Primary Grades.
3. Development of Reading Skills in Curriculum Areas.

SPEAKERS AND PANEL:

Mary C. Austin	Leo C. Fay
LaVerne Strong	Nancy Larrick
William D. Sheldon	E. A. Hansen

Direct versus Incidental Teaching Of Reading beyond the Primary Grades

by WILLIAM KOTTMAYER

● ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT OF
SCHOOLS, ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

Direct Teaching Of Reading Defined

WORDS like *direct* and *incidental*, when applied to reading programs, have curiously varied meanings for those who use them to symbolize a complex of philosophic concepts, pedagogical practices, and cherished opinions. In order to focus attention upon the pertinent issues implied by the subject, I venture first to define direct as opposed to incidental teaching of reading. I conceive the direct teaching of reading to be a planned series of orderly learning activities which are calculated to develop specific reading skills which have been identified through an analysis of the total reading process. In such teaching the primary but not sole objective is the mastery of the skill, and the content of the reading material, factually useful, entertaining, or inspiring though it may be, is essentially the means and not the end. Direct teaching of reading implies also that provision is made for the regular assignment of time in the school day for the development of such skills. It also implies that the learning materials to produce these skills are designed or selected for that purpose. The phrase, "beyond the primary grades," of course, suggests that the nature of the interpretative skills in reading is such

that they continue to grow in complexity when applied to typical printed learning materials beyond the third grade, and that continued guidance from a teacher is normally necessary for most pupils.

Indirect Teaching Of Reading Defined

In contrast, I presume the incidental teaching of reading to mean, actually, no purposeful effort to secure growth in any particular or specific reading skill. The proponents of incidental skill mastery hold that the teacher's function is to cause learners to use printed materials to answer questions, to provide useful information, to make judgments, to entertain or amuse, and that, in the pursuit and achievement of such objectives, the necessary reading skills will naturally—and incidentally—be acquired. They usually hold, further, that only when skills are thus acquired do they become "functional," i.e., are they readily applied in situations in which a need for any particular skill appears. Those who hold this point of view usually see no need to provide additional time in the school schedule for reading activities because the use of any printed materials automatically gives occasion and opportunity for the growth of reading skill. They usually use sparingly the

reading materials which are designed to produce reading skills and, when the materials include suggestions for use to achieve the purposes for which the materials were made, would regard such use as too narrowly and artificially prescribed for effective learning.

Criticism and Defense of Direct Teaching

Critics of direct teaching usually assert that activities which are intended to develop specific reading skills are too easily isolated from desirable total natural learning situations and that skills thus apparently acquired rarely become functional. Advocates of direct teaching of course deny that skills so acquired are not functional and they assert that only when clear objectives are defined and purposeful activities are planned and carried out can there be assurance that all basic reading skills are developed and that all pupils in a group acquire necessary reading skills. They point to evidence in the form of standardized reading test scores which, in many studies, show substantial gains as the result of direct teaching.

The critics also hold that direct teaching all too often degenerates into dull, monotonous, and isolated drill which wearies the learners who see no purpose in it. The defenders retort that malpractice of any method is common and that we must not fall into the fallacy of indicting any method of teaching because of its abuses.

It is also said that stress upon the growth of skills usually creates a teaching situation in which the power-

ful stimulus of interest is minimized. The customary reply is that activities calculated to develop skills are in themselves not inimical to the interest factor in learning. Proponents of direct teaching here also point out that interest alone, although spectacularly rewarding in occasional individual cases, is *per se* no guarantee for the acquisition of reading skills, and cite the studies showing high percentages of incompetent readers in schools which, for some years, have embraced a *laissez faire* policy with respect to the reading skills. They point out also that there are several kinds of interest and that the interest which is engendered by growth in skill is generally underrated by those who prize the impelling force of intrinsic interest.

The critics of direct teaching are often restive about the use of basal reading materials and maintain that the restrictions of prescribed procedure in the use of learning materials inhibits "creative" teaching, particularly on the part of able teachers. The defenders point out the virtues of the use of this kind of learning material:

(a) It provides for the orderly growth and development of reading skills through vocabulary and concept control. (b) It provides a sequentially planned program which enables learning to be continuous under the direction of different teachers. (c) It permits ready adjustment of learning material to individual differences among pupils. (d) It facilitates the development of in-service programs by providing a common program with common objectives. (e) It gives valu-

able aid and guidance to the increasing number of young and inexperienced teachers who are often not well trained in the teaching of reading.

It is sometimes charged that the practice of direct teaching of reading with basal reading materials could be defended only if we had graded schools in which all pupils in a grade were at the same stage of growth in reading achievement and could profitably learn in large groups. As social or chronological promotion has become generally practiced, the need for adjustment of a wide variety of reading materials and individualized instruction has become necessary. The counter argument is that basal reading materials can more readily be adapted to individual needs than a heterogeneous collection of reading material and that carefully graded books and a planned sequence of reading activities are precisely what is needed to conduct successful programs in modern classrooms.

The criticism is also made that the formal provision in a classroom schedule for reading activities, in contrast to the use of reading activities to meet a need for information to solve a problem when it occurs, results in an artificial learning situation in which little growth is derived. The rebuttal here is that only when reading activities are regularly and generously scheduled can there be any assurance that requisite skills will be developed. It is of course denied that effective learning does not take place merely because a specific need has not appeared to impel a reading activity.

Criticism and Defense of Indirect Teaching of Reading

Critics of indirect methods of teaching reading point accusingly to the current dissatisfaction on the part of lay and professional observers with the reading achievement in the schools in recent years and to the many low scores in reading surveys made in school systems. This sad state of affairs, they aver, is ample evidence that during recent years the prevailing philosophy of indirect teaching, in considerable vogue in the last quarter century, has been unsuccessful. The defense replies that critics of the schools have ever been vociferous and that they were even more bitter during that era in which direct methods were predominant. The teaching of reading is infinitely more complex than ever before, the school population is far more heterogeneous, there is still too much adherence to direct methods, and, when all these factors are weighed, we must conclude that never before in the history of American schools, has reading been as well taught as today.

It is asserted that the argument that the mastery of skills must be contrived incidentally within the setting of a felt need to secure information for the solution of a problem by a group of pupils is unrealistic theory. How, demand the critics of indirect teaching, with the wide range of reading ability in every classroom, with the paucity of reading materials of various levels of difficulty in the content areas of the curriculum, and with the wide range of children's interests

is it possible to secure systematic and continuous growth in reading skills? The "indirect" advocates hold that learning, to be enduring and vivid, must occur in just such situations and that the better teachers in the better schools are following such patterns of teaching.

It is further commonly stated that the textbook materials in the content areas of the curriculum are poor instruments to secure the continued growth of reading skills as some textbooks are considerably more difficult than their grade placement. When reading materials are beyond the level of many children who use them, reading skills cease to improve. In view of these facts, it appears that the use of materials specifically designed to extend reading skills is highly desirable and dependence upon other materials for the incidental learning of reading skills is questionable. The usual reply to this criticism is that the quality of the learning materials does not impugn the theory and we must try to produce more suitable materials.

The observation has also been made that although the philosophy of incidental teaching of reading appears to give successful results with intelligent children with good home backgrounds of language experience, it has been conspicuously unsuccessful with many slow learning pupils. Note is also made of the fact that the most eloquent defenders of the incidental philosophy are those who have dealt largely with relatively privileged groups, that those who favor direct methods deal with large classroom

groups of average and underprivileged pupils. The latter group, of course, is far more numerous than the former.

There are doubtless other points of view about what precisely is meant by the terms, and other criticisms and defenses of both direct and indirect teaching of reading. More discussion can pertinently be devoted to pointing out the differences between reading activities in the primary and in the post-primary grades. Within the limited premises of this brief paper, the writer, whose experiences in the reading field are confined to a large city school system with several thousand teachers who are particularly concerned with the reading achievement of large numbers of pupils, takes the position that the case for direct teaching is substantially the stronger of the two.

Advantages of Direct Teaching

Briefly, the advantages seem to be these:

When a large number of people are involved in the development of a complex group of related skills over a period of years in a variety of learning situations, with large instructional groups, it seems only reasonable to plan procedures sequentially, to design learning materials to accomplish clearly defined objectives, and to use them systematically.

If all teachers who participate in a reading program of a community or district are highly competent, experienced teachers who understand the reading process from beginning to end, the argument for direct teaching

loses some appeal; however, as such a state of affairs rarely exists, it seems that the greatest total good for the greatest number of pupils can be accomplished by prosecuting a philosophy of direct teaching.

Those who have dealt with the vexing problem of raising the level of reading instruction in large school systems often become impatient with the content of in-service improvement programs which deal in vague generalities which are curiously interpreted in practice. The materials and methods of direct teaching tend to be specific and, although dispute may arise concerning them, there is usually little doubt as to what the program calls

for and how it is to be achieved.

I have some difficulty in understanding how effective supervision can be accomplished in a large school system without a common understanding among teachers as to the objectives of a reading program and as to the manner of achieving the objective.

I, myself, have never seen a clearly defined and intelligently conducted program of direct teaching — of a scope that permits careful observation—fail to achieve gratifying gains in skill as measured either by teacher judgment or objective measures of reading skill. The literature of the reading field is replete with substantiating evidence.

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Reply to Dr. Kottmeyer's Address

by PAUL WITTY

● NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

IT WAS a pleasure to listen to Dr. Kottmeyer's provocative treatment of systematic versus incidental instruction in reading. One of the greatest strengths in his paper on "Basic Reading Instruction Beyond the Primary Grades" lies in its clear definition of terms and issues. But herein too lies a possible danger or weakness.

Although I am in complete agreement with Dr. Kottmeyer's insistence on the provision of orderly and systematic instruction in basic reading skills, I am wondering whether we can so arbitrarily and neatly divide instruction into *two* categories . . . the direct and the indirect approaches. Do not

good teachers make effective combinations of these methods in realizing the values and outcomes attributed to both approaches? And is not the achievement of this articulation one of the objectives of a sound program of instruction?

In this connection, I should like to make three additional points. The first relates to the need for flexibility in approaches to reading instruction. This is necessary in order to care for the wide range of reading abilities within each class. A great variation within classes has been reported in many studies, including Dr. Kottmeyer's of St. Louis' pupils. Accordingly, skillful adapta-

tion of the program is necessary within each grade. Moreover, systematic instruction in reading is required in the high school to care for pupils who have not yet attained proficiency.

The second point relates to the interest factor. Interest is of course not a product or concomitant limited to either the direct or indirect approach, although it sometimes is engendered by a child's awareness of his mastery of reading skills. But it is a product too of the association of reading experience with his own activities or objects of concern or "interest" to him. It is also a product of a sensed relationship of reading experience to developmental needs.

Again, I am aware of Dr. Kottmeyer's interest in this aspect of reading instruction and of the excellent work of the St. Louis schools in suggesting books for teachers to use in efforts to satisfy various interests and needs of pupils.

Finally, I want to point out that the process of developing good readers—children who become adaptable in using skills and independent in employing reading sources to satisfy their interests and needs—is one that requires not only specific instruction and help for pupils in the acquisition of skills, but also systematic guidance in the use of reading sources. I believe that this guidance must also be systematically planned and carried out. Thus mastery of the skills will enable boys and girls to enjoy the *act* of reading, and experience in reading according to interest will lead them to enjoy the *results* of reading. To accomplish this end, a balanced but planned program

of reading instruction is required. I should have liked to have seen a little more emphasis given to these considerations and their place in the total reading program. But, perhaps, this is too much to expect in *one* short paper. Dr. Kottmeyer's masterful presentation has succeeded in setting forth clearly and unequivocally certain issues which I feel sure this audience will want to discuss fully.

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Comments

After Dr. Witty made his remarks, Dr. Gray, the chairman, asked Dr. Kottmeyer if he would have any further comments. Dr. Kottmeyer stated that he couldn't particularly disagree with Dr. Witty's observations. Dr. Kottmeyer stated that the basic question to be considered was the advisability of letting reading skills happen by chance in the post-primary years. "I advocate a systematic effort toward continual reading progress." He went on and stated that he did not wish to minimize the advantages which result from the indirect method of teaching reading in other curricular areas.

Dr. Witty observed that the incidental method revolves around teaching a few skills, which are useful in connection with reading. "I do believe there are people going to both extremes," Dr. Witty continued. "The type of program which you advocate is entirely laudable. Dr. Kottmeyer's speech has dealt with a problem which has always earmarked one of the first problems in reading instruction."

Controversial Issues Relating to Reading in the Curricular Areas

by GERTRUDE WHIPPLE

● DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS
WAYNE UNIVERSITY

ALL OF US know that reading plays an important role in the study of problems in the curricular fields. Reading enables us to obtain information and insight concerning many different things, such as personal problems, social issues, and current happenings. Also, the large amount and variety of reading material available today make discriminating selection essential. However, the teaching of curricular reading remains a subject of numerous controversies. We shall define three of the major issues, survey important opposing facts and theories relating to each issue, and make recommendations based on the available evidence.

Are we right in assuming as we often have in the past that basic reading instruction can develop all the skills needed in curricular reading?

There are those who feel that all the training necessary to read the content materials should have been given earlier by someone else. Then the child would merely have to apply his skills in the given content area. The argument of these teachers is that the use of time in guiding reading reduces the opportunity to cover the subject matter prescribed in the course of study. They point to the large number of topics, facts, and general principles to be taught during the brief time allotted to their subject.

Others believe that the teaching of reading belongs to the whole school. According to them, reading is not a set of skills that can be developed during basic instruction and then applied unchangeably to content in various subject areas. They point out that the reading materials in each field are somewhat unique. Each field uses different language, involves different modes of interpretation, and presents ideas that are applied differently in the learning activities. The reading skills can be developed best in the situations where they are used rather than out of that setting at another time of the day. For example, the clarification of many words is helped by the context in which they appear and by other aids to learning used in the subject, such as maps, charts, diagrams, models, pictures, interviews, and field trips.

Again, several studies have shown that, other things being equal, groups given reading guidance in a curricular area show greater subject-matter attainments than groups for whom no such training is provided.

We recommend, therefore, that the teacher of every curricular area be a teacher of reading in the sense that he stimulates purposeful reading, guides the reading experiences of his pupils, and furthers their abilities in the reading activities required.

If basic reading cannot develop all the necessary reading skills, what is the desirable division between basic reading and curricular reading in developing essential reading and study habits in particular curricular areas?

Of those who accept responsibility for giving reading guidance in the curricular fields, some would limit it largely to instruction in the semi-technical vocabulary; others would teach not only vocabulary but also the highly specialized reading skills such as those required in reading maps or statistical tables; and still others would go all the way in helping children to read in the area. Among other steps they would appraise children's reading abilities in the area, group them for reading activities, choose reading materials to fit their abilities, guide the reading activities, and provide special help to overcome reading difficulties.

What position ought we to take toward this issue? If we accept the view that the demands made on the reader vary with the nature of the material read, it would seem that we should define different teachers' responsibilities in terms of these demands. The teacher of basic reading, using unspecialized reading materials, should teach the skills that are fundamental to all reading of whatever kind. These include skills in word recognition, meaning vocabulary, oral reading, comprehension, interpretation, speed of reading, and use of books. He should also stress the importance of having purposes for reading and of understanding the type

of reading called for in satisfying the purpose.

The teacher of a content field, on the other hand, should guide his students in the application of the basic skills to the reading materials used in his area, and should also teach the special reading skills required. In the social studies, for instance, the reader must locate material by reading selectively with questions in mind, must recognize the semi-technical words and obtain their meanings, and must interpret what he reads, drawing upon important concepts that he has acquired earlier in the social studies. Since the map is a unique instrument in this school subject, he must engage in map-text reading, that is, as he uses reading material accompanied by maps, he must interpret the significance of the verbal description with reference to features shown on the map. Also in the higher grades he must often carry on critical interpretation—ask what evidence is given for a statement and what other writers on the subject say. He must develop standards of accuracy, rejecting materials which seem out of date, inaccurate, or false. Certainly learning to read in this way can be done only in the midst of curricular materials and with the use of special library aids.

To what extent are changes needed in current teaching practices if effective reading and study habits are eventually to be developed?

In explaining reasons why students encounter so many difficulties in curricular reading, some educators say that basic reading instruction is seri-

ously at fault. They assert that reading is taught as a separate subject unrelated to the child's interests and his use of reading in everyday activities. Then, too, basic instruction is not systematic and not carefully planned, and as a result many important reading habits and abilities are overlooked. Other educators, however, trace the main fault to curricular reading. They believe that, as sound guidance is provided in curricular subjects, the difficulties of most students will disappear. Between these two extremes are many who believe that extensive reforms are needed in both basic instruction and curricular instruction.

As we examine the issues under consideration, the following recommendations for changes in basic instruction seem deserving of consideration.

1. Reading should be taught in such a way as to serve the entire curriculum. This involves making objective surveys of children's reading abilities and their capacities to learn, developing a program of reading instruction in terms of their specific needs, seeing that the program is systematic and sequential, motivating the child rather than making assignments, and providing reading materials having as wide a range of reading difficulty as the range of reading abilities in the class. With real growth in basic skills thus provided for, the teacher should then do everything he can to insure carry-over of learning from one reading situation to another. For instance, he may invite students to suggest how they will use their new

skills in the library or the science laboratory. He may keep the teachers of the content areas informed as to what he learns about the children's reading abilities and what he has taught them.

2. When deficiencies in basic reading skills appear which block progress in learning activities, remedial instruction should be provided aimed at specific weaknesses.

3. The reading materials supplied for basic instruction should include a much larger proportion of informational material. At present, subject-matter specialists assert, the many entertaining narratives used lead children to expect all reading material to have spontaneous interest appeal. They are ill prepared to undertake reading of an expository type such as that so essential in the curricular fields.

4. Teachers should eliminate the idea that all selections are to be read only once and in a casual and superficial manner. In other words, a larger number of the basic reading activities should be designed to promote depth of understanding.

Next let us consider changes advocated in current practices in the curricular fields.

1. Courses of study ought to be revised to enable teachers to provide reading guidance much more easily. Many courses include so much subject matter to be covered that they tend to crowd out attention to the child's reading needs. Unimportant subject matter and too advanced concepts ought to be eliminated. Topics should be fewer and covered more thoroughly, for time is required to

promote insight and to develop concepts through reading.

Also courses of study ought to be so constructed that they lend themselves to adaptation to *all* the children of the grade. No longer should we hold to the idea of equal achievement by all. Every grade level should provide for diversity.

In addition, courses of study should guide the teacher in identifying the main groups of reading abilities to be developed in his class.

2. Teaching procedures in situations involving reading need vast improvement. Many teachers do not understand the nature of the guidance needed when reading is used in learning activities. They organize oral reading around the class with all the children watching the reading material, or use the question-and-answer method following silent reading. Instead the reading activities should be specifically designed to further definite goals in the subject-matter area. The teacher should prepare the children for the reading, make provisions for individual differences in developing purposes for reading, lead the children to select the materials to be read, organize interesting supplementary activities, set up committees to make special studies, carry on discussions based on reading, and teach the use of the library as a source of information and pleasure.

Undoubtedly one of the teacher's most pressing problems is what to do about the child who is retarded in reading. Since most of these pupils find reading the hardest way to learn, the teacher may well discover and re-

inforce the child's assets, emphasizing other methods of learning, then supplementing these with very simple reading.

3. Once we are certain of a good course of study and of teachers who understand their responsibilities for reading guidance, we must make another improvement—that of providing a variety of suitable reading materials. Objective studies of science and social-studies textbooks have indicated that many of them offer too great difficulty for the pupils for whom they were written. They present too many ideas and too difficult ideas for the normal reader of the grade. Furthermore, it is impossible for a single textbook for a single supplementary book to fit the needs of children who are five or more years apart in reading achievement. This statement is not intended to discourage the use of textbooks as organizing devices, but there should also be a supply of many other books at different levels of reading difficulty relating to the same topics. Students need material, too, of literary quality that will take them beyond the scientific or social facts to the spiritual and aesthetic qualities in life.

Finally, a very important recommendation, applying to both basic and curricular instruction, is that all members of the school staff need to cooperate in developing a carefully coordinated program in which basic instruction provides initial development of the abilities and skills that are required in most reading situations, and curricular reading supplies guidance as the children participate in learning activities in a given field.

Responsibility for the Development of Reading Skills Needed in Content Areas

by ERNEST HORN

● UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

TOO MUCH EMPHASIS cannot be placed upon the importance, as Dr. Whipple points out, of identifying the principal reading abilities and then designing a plan by which these abilities will be developed, not only in special reading periods but in other curricular areas as well. The trend has been to define reading much more broadly than in the past to include all the abilities needed to work with books. I think this is a good thing for if these abilities are not grouped with reading, it is difficult to know just where they would appear.

There is a reciprocal relation between reading in a reading class and reading in other fields, such as social studies. Much of what the pupil learns in school is learned from books, and reading is motivated and perfected, or frustrated, by the nature of the work done in these other fields. In fact, poor reading scores on a well-balanced descriptive test are *prima facie* evidence of poor teaching in such fields as social studies and science. Efficient work in other areas is impossible for pupils with poor reading abilities, and if these subjects are properly taught, achievement scores above the present standard reading norms will be made even if there are no reading periods systematically provided. In the elementary school, however, there should be provision for the systematic teaching of

reading, with a special place in the program. The best results are obtained when the reading done in other subjects and reading done in the reading class are closely integrated.

Problem Method Of Teaching Is Advocated

The problem method of teaching in the content subjects has been widely advocated for nearly forty years, and rightly so, but, as I shall presently point out, it is neglected more than it is utilized. Suppose, for example, that the problem in social studies is: Should we attempt to become self-sufficient in the production of paper instead of depending so largely upon Canada to furnish pulp and paper? What reading abilities would the student need in attacking this problem?

- He would need to find books or articles bearing on his problem and to evaluate their dependability.
- He would need to read with accurate comprehension, to select statements in relation to his problem, to appraise the adequacy of each statement, and to select the data which seem most useful.
- He would need to organize these data, possibly secured from several sources, for the solution of his problem. It would help him

to be able to make a logical outline.

- He would need to decide what to remember and how to go about remembering it.

It seems reasonable to expect that what is done in the reading period should develop these essential reading abilities and encourage their use in the reading done in other subjects. An examination of the courses of study as well as of basic reading texts shows that some of the important abilities are commonly neglected. There is very little, for example, on how to organize information gained from a number of different sources or on how to remember what is read.

Two Unfavorable Practices Are Described

It also seems reasonable to assume that these abilities should be utilized and perfected in other subjects, yet a critical examination of instruction in other fields discloses that the conditions under which reading is done are far from satisfactory. Time permits calling attention to only two unfavorable practices. Thompson, in an investigation of social studies instruction in high school in one state, reported that page-by-page assignments to a single textbook were found in 92 per cent of the classes—no problems, not even topics—and that these assignments in more than four-fifths of the classes were followed by question-and-answer types of recitation, likewise based on the single textbook. Many of the questions could be, and were, answered by parroting the words of the text.

These procedures are not found in all schools, but other surveys indicate that they are distressingly widespread, both in high schools and in elementary schools. It would be difficult to intentionally devise a method more unfavorable either to the development of reading ability or to the development of interest and understanding in the social studies. These practices are deplorable for several reasons. First, they do not help the pupil to set up purposes for reading. Second, they ignore the wide range of reading ability at every grade level—usually seven or eight achievement years. The plight of the students in the lower fourth in reading ability is especially tragic. These students are subjected, day by day and year by year, to the frustration of assignments to books which they cannot read. Third, they are woefully inadequate to develop and practice those reading abilities which are characteristically needed in reading about problems in life outside the school.

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Audience Participation

QUESTION: *Should remedial teaching be done by a special teacher, or by the regular classroom teacher, or by what process?*

Dr. Kottmeyer replied that the answer depends upon how *remedial* reading is defined, and that there appears to be some confusion between the terms *remedial* and *developmental* reading. If, by remedial reading we mean the adjusting of instruction and material to individual differences, then most of our instruction must be done by the classroom teacher. If we so

define developmental reading, then remedial reading has small place in the classroom. There are far too many reading clinic cases who could and should have been taught in the classroom. Intense remedial instruction in clinical situations should not normally be done before the third grade. Adjustment of instruction—remedial or developmental—becomes increasingly difficult as the pupil-teacher ratio mounts. Most teachers have too many pupils to teach. When elaborate remedial facilities are provided there is a tendency for some classroom teachers to depend too heavily upon them.

QUESTION: *In the incidental method of reading, when would they, in that program, bring in any of the things which they develop in the direct method of teaching? "In other words," Dr. Gray explained, "how do we go about getting in what we refer to as 'reading skills'?"*

Dr. Horn answered his question. "I started my career on trying to teach the incidental method of reading. If somebody would devise a curriculum showing how each skill is going to be developed and specify the skill for this thing, I would be a little better satisfied with it. The purpose of this basic skill program is that it is a constant reminder that there are these abilities and they had better be meeting them. They say when the skill comes up during the normal class routine, take care of it then, and put it to work often."

Dr. Gray agreed with Dr. Horn that

"development of these skills comes in when the rule is being illustrated." Thus, briefly, you bring them in when the need for them arises."

QUESTION: *Should the teacher of another subject, the Social Studies, for example, be a reading teacher also? And what about the remedial reading pupil in other subjects?*

Dr. Horn suggested, in answer to the latter, that books written at the child's reading level be used. Dr. Whipple answered the former part by saying, "Undoubtedly there should be a definite preparation for work in the middle field during the primary years." She further stated that there is an excellent opportunity for bringing in pictures to illustrate the lessons, for example, showing parts of the world and the kind of life which they live. Also, she stated that discussions were very helpful rather than reading, in some instances, in developing the basic concepts.

QUESTION: *It was mentioned that in Scotland, four- and five-year-olds are beginning their reading training. Do their eyes mature earlier there than here?*

Dr. Gray said that the problem of vision apparently is not a serious one. Whether this type of program is the most desirable type or not is a matter of controversy. But, he stated, it is being done. It has been proved that their average in the first grade is equal to about the second or third grade in our schools.

Classroom Libraries Are Not Enough

by AGNES KRARUP

● DIRECTOR OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES
PITTSBURGH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

"DO YOU remember me? I'm the boy who was reading the book on the care of feeding of fish. Is it O.K. if I go and get it again?" He is new or he would know he need not ask permission. Every school librarian has watched an eager figure move straight toward a shelf and without hesitation lay hands on a book which he has discovered and which he considers a gold mine of information. This is one of the greatest rewards of her work, the solid satisfaction of seeing a child use a book because for the moment it meets his needs exactly.

Because children differ so greatly in interests and abilities, they need to have at hand as large and as varied a collection of books as can be provided. Many school administrators, recognizing this need, are establishing centralized libraries in their elementary schools so that the younger children will have access to books and to library service comparable to that enjoyed for years by high school and junior high school students. Paradoxically, however, other school administrators, accepting the idea of the self-contained classroom, have recently eliminated well established libraries by dividing their books among the teachers. Library service is thus dispensed with and the number of books accessible to each child is reduced in proportion to the number of teachers in the building. Teachers naturally

like to have and should have books in their classrooms, but decisions concerning central libraries in schools should be made with reference to the best total education for each child.

Rich and Varied Library Sources Must be Supplied

There is a kind of education that may be unrelated to the experiences a child is having at any given moment in a classroom, yet may be equally valid for him. Its motivation is a driving curiosity in children that has compelling force. If a picture book of trucks is placed on a table, boys of all ages will look at it, usually in pairs so that each can point out to the other what he sees. Girls in the most underprivileged districts of a large city will sit and copy a poem for no other reason than that they want to possess a copy of that poem. Perhaps it represents one form of loveliness that is not denied them. Boys, as well as girls, beg to take home the copies of cook-books which are kept as reference because there are never enough of those that do circulate for home use to satisfy the demand. Teachers have always been thankful that children possess this urge to learn for themselves and the initiative to find out what they want to know. Schools, realizing that the process of growth would be slow indeed if young people were only passive little receptacles, have tried to

provide for individual interests. One of the best ways to develop diverse talents and abilities is to supply rich and varied library resources.

Given a good library and some ability to read, most children will set up for themselves a course of study all their own, a curriculum that fits their individual desires and interests. They will read about alligators and dinosaurs, superstitions and magic, mountain climbing and skin diving, the F.B.I. and the Coast Guard, space travel and submarines, Daniel Boone and Kit Carson, ballet and puppetry, stamps and astronomy, explorers and musicians, good grooming and manners. Through fiction they will come to understand the migrant worker's child who yearns to settle in one spot and go to one school; they will live for a time in a creaking covered wagon crossing the plains; they may discover that moral strength often calls forth more from the human spirit than do demands on physical courage. Their intense interest in biography will acquaint them with many careers and show them qualities of character and soul which they can safely emulate.

What children read in this way may or may not tie in with the subject matter of their grade, but it certainly makes them better informed and more interesting human beings. It keeps inquiring minds alive and permits the pursuit of a particular hobby. It is the very stuff of education.

Libraries Help Children Pursue Their Own Learning

At no time in our history have school librarians been in a better posi-

tion to help children who are pursuing their own avenues of learning than at present. This is an era rich in children's books, many of them on subjects previously not presented in words and sentences that elementary school children could understand. Today no one is surprised to find material on atoms or electronics or jet propulsion being read in the intermediate grades. Other subjects have only recently been adequately treated, after the discovery that children like facts but want them straight and not smothered in the treacle of a covering story. Bennett Cerf of Random House has stated that he first decided upon publishing the now famous "Landmark Books" when he learned that nowhere could his fifth grade son find books to satisfy his desire to read American history in some detail. It was soon apparent that hundreds of other boys and girls actually wanted to read American history. So successful with schools and libraries was this venture that the first ten titles of a new series, "World Landmark Books", have just been added to the fifty-six titles in the original group. Another series, published by Franklin Watts, called "First Books" at this writing numbers over fifty titles on subjects as varied as automobiles and ballet, baseball and music, all so well done that they not only inform children in elementary school but also attract slow readers in junior and even senior high school. Similarly Garden City's "Real Book Series" and Random House's "All About Series" are proving useful with high school students. Indeed the librarians who review them are acquiring basic infor-

mation themselves on innumerable subjects.

In addition to the many good publishers' series there are excellent books of science written especially for intermediate grade readers by such authors as Herbert Zim, Jerome S. Meyer, and Herbert and Nina Schneider. Because there is no hint of talking down or patronizing in today's straightforward, no-nonsense presentation of information, many of these books are now graded by school librarians "fourth grade and up". Undoubtedly the demands of educators for simpler materials have contributed to this happy state of affairs. Whatever the explanation, there is now a wealth of non-fiction at hand to catch in a net of interest many children who think that they do not care to read or who have simply been unwilling to make the effort.

High Interest—Easy Reading Books Are Available

At this point one might ask, "What about the children who do not possess enough reading ability to handle even these relatively easy books?" They have not been forgotten by the publishers either. The first consistently easy to read series to appeal to large numbers of boys and girls was the Bobbs Merrill "Childhood of Famous Americans Series". *Abe Lincoln, Frontier Boy* by Augusta Stevenson was copyrighted in 1932, and the publisher's catalog now lists seventy-six of these popular books. Just why they appeal so universally may be fully established some day through research. They are smaller than the

average book, being 7¾ inches high; the covers are a uniform orange printed in black and do not compare with the gay appearance of some other books on the shelves; and the pictures are silhouettes, supposed to be the least liked by children of all forms of book illustration. The repetition of words makes them easy to read, however; the broken up page with wide margins is known to appeal to children; and the trade book format adds prestige to the reading. Adults find them boring, but children devour them.

The Wheeler Publishing Company with its "American Adventure Series" has produced an almost irresistible lure for older boys who dislike reading. These books progress in difficulty from *Friday, the Arapahoe Indian* to *John Paul Jones*. Many librarians can mention eighth grade boys who have announced proudly that *Buffalo Bill* or *Kit Carson* was the first book they had ever read clear through. Once that hurdle is over they seem pleased to read more of these and so are well started toward improvement.

For years librarians have known that one of the most popular readers on their shelves is *After the Sun Sets* by Miriam Huber (Row, Peterson & Co.). Based on folk tales with their universal values, yet written at the third grade level, this book was among the first to combine real ease of reading with the authentic flavor of the truly literary form from which the stories were derived. Recently E. W. and M. P. Dolch have brought out three books in a "Basic Vocabulary Series" which are already proving to

have comparable drawing power. These are retold folk tales, "why" stories, and beast stories and are written almost entirely in "220 Basic Sight Words and 95 Commonest Nouns". The "Pleasure Reading Series" to be used after the first three are also retellings but in the expanded vocabulary of the "First Thousand Words for Children's Reading". The format of these books is such that an older child can read them and carry them home feeling that he has a real book, not a reader, a matter of vital importance to him.

Centralized Library Can Carry A Large Selection of Books

With school libraries thus strengthened so that they have the resources to serve children of all abilities and with differing interests, the desirability of having the books in a central place under the direction of an expert who is familiar with their contents must be apparent. Why then has the return to self-contained classrooms sometimes resulted in the elimination of the centralized library? Perhaps it is because under the platoon system the library was characterized as a "special subject" and the reorganization has returned all such subjects to the academic teacher. This procedure overlooks the fact that a librarian serves teachers as well as children with her special knowledge. It also poses an administratively difficult question: where is each book to be placed? The decision will necessarily be quite arbitrary and can hardly be made with the fullest use of the books in mind. Children's hobby and leisure reading will suffer when

only a small selection of books is available to them. Accessibility is known to be a decisive factor in the number and quality of books children read, and past experience has shown that classroom leisure reading collections are not only expensive but that they soon become stale. They are unsatisfactory also because the eighth grade boy who needs to read *Buffalo Bill* is unlikely to find it if it is down in the fourth grade room, and the intelligent fifth grade girl who is ready for *Little Women* may never see it until she reaches eighth grade. Even with the most flexible kind of exchange system and conscious, time-consuming effort on the teacher's part, the unusual book that a child finds in a centralized library by chance, may be missed entirely.

The Services of Librarian Are Necessary

The kind of arrangement which librarians envision as meeting the needs of individual children and of their teachers as well would give easy and frequent access to an attractive library full of bright looking, informative books on many subjects. It would provide for a free flow of these books from the library to the classrooms and back to supplement the permanent collections of materials that teachers need to have on hand throughout the year. Librarians would continue to have ample opportunity to work with children in groups and alone, challenging the gifted, stimulating the average, and helping the slow. No school should be deprived of a librarian's expert knowledge of books and her enthusiasm for them, adjuncts as valuable for learn-

ing as the books themselves. Children would continue to learn to use libraries skillfully and to look upon them as the friendly, helpful places they are. Teachers would have richer and more flexible resources at hand. This kind of service would require an adequate

book budget, generous shelf and storage space, and time and clerical help for the librarian. Administrators who believe that the ideas in books influence children's dreams, often affecting their lives profoundly, will agree that classroom libraries are not enough.

Can We Improve Reading By Using Mechanical Devices?

by DR. WILLIAM D. SHELDON
● SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

MANY TEACHERS have asked questions about the use of mechanical devices as an aid in reading instruction. There seems to be no clear opinion among experts as to the use and the value of devices. In the following article, we shall present current thinking based on research concerning the use of various instruments.

Instruments for the Improvement Of Comprehension

Can the utilization of mechanical devices facilitate the rate of comprehension? At present, research indicates that only slight, if any, improvement in the rate of comprehension is brought about by the use of various instruments.

Staton and Maize (12) used the reading rate controller with Air Force officers over a period of twenty hours. They found by its use an extremely high increase in reading speed but only a three per cent increment in reading comprehension. In another experiment, where the reading rate controller was utilized, the writer found that those individuals who timed them-

selves while reading showed as much improvement in comprehension as those who used the reading rate controller. It was noted, however, by Wedeen (14) that both mechanical and non-mechanical techniques produced greater comprehension improvement in college freshmen who served as experimental subjects than in freshmen who were not given either type of training. Smith and Tate (11) found that, although their college students felt they were making tremendous strides in reading improvement, they actually showed a loss in comprehension.

The question of why machines do not seem to bring about improvement in the area of comprehension is tied in with thought processes and reading purposes. A piece of machinery will not develop or enhance the reasoning power of students. The transfer of training from the use of machines is almost negligible. And, to be effective, what is learned on a mechanical apparatus must be carried over into the classroom situation. It is highly improbable that reasoning can be devel-

oped by either flashing numbers, words, phrases, or sentences on a screen. Nor does one's ability to interpret a piece of literature seem to be improved by reading it while having a metal bar or screen shutter cover each line in a blot-like fashion. Any elementary reading textbook emphasizes the need to develop concepts and background in order to understand better that which is heard, seen, or read. Unfortunately, it is not yet within the scope of mechanical devices to meet these needs. Until the reading rate controller, the tachistoscope, the metronoscope, or other instruments are able to achieve this end, it is unlikely that the development of comprehension skills will be improved by mechanical techniques.

Do Mechanical Devices Develop Purpose, Rate, and Flexibility Of Reading?

Purpose in reading is another factor which places mechanical devices at a disadvantage when the improvement of reading is concerned. When one reads specifically for pleasure or for a special vicarious experience, there may not be the need to absorb details, to find main themes, or to concentrate on central concepts. For this reason reading can take the form of scanning or skimming, and thus much can be gained in the way of enjoyment. However, the learning of school subjects calls for the ability to get the most out of one's textbook. This can mean reading one paragraph quickly, then slowing up and studying the next paragraph. The keynote here is flexibility. The essence of high-level reading skill

is the ability to know when to read quickly and when to scrutinize almost every word. Machines are not adjusted, nor do they operate on the principle of aiding the students to vary his rate to purpose. Carrillo and Sheldon (2) state that "if speed drills are given, the students should know why the material being used for this may be read rapidly and still be comprehended."

Mechanical Devices and Motivation

In a machine age, it is fitting that we should turn to machines when we need aid. The machines have not entirely let us down. There are very few investigators who would take issue with the theory that mechanical devices motivate children. Exactly what the motivation leads to, however, is the moot point. No doubt many teachers have found that the net effect of motivation which comes from forces external to the student, rather than internal needs, is soon lost. The value of instruments as motivating agents appear to lie in the novel effects they present. Therefore, when used as stepping stones, mechanical devices may afford a method for breaking down resistance to reading instruction.

Perceptual Habits And Machines

Dolch (6) claims that flashing machines require the child to focus on the center of a word or phrase perceiving out to the periphery. But he goes on to say that there is no commonality of agreement among reading specialists regarding size of the "perceiving area" and whether it can be

lengthened. If it is true that one's eye-span cannot be widened, then one of the claimed values of not only mechanical devices but also non-mechanical timed reading sessions must be questioned. However, until more conclusive evidence is forthcoming in either direction, it might be best for teachers to operate upon the premise that perceptual habits in the individual can be improved. Gates (7) and Stroud (13) make the point that there is no relationship between visual perception and the improvement of reading rate. This seems to mean that a pupil who lacks what are considered to be "good" eye-movements, may do just as well in reading as the pupil who exhibits few regressions or fixations, among other things. In other words, there appears to be little need to train students to improve their eye-movements in order to make them faster readers.

Davis (5) has made use of the tachistoscope for a different purpose. She advocates using this device to lengthen and direct the attention of primary grade children to printed symbols. In some instances she uses the tachistoscope as a stillmeter rather than as a flashmeter. Her feeling is, that it aids the development of far-point focusing in young children. In addition, it is a device that lends itself to games that develop vocabulary and phonic sensitivity. This appears to be a laudable use of the instrument. But when used as a still device, it does not meet the main purpose for which it was devised, i.e., as a flashing meter. Where some sort of fixed presentation of material is needed to teach phonics

or to enrich vocabulary, teachers can use less costly cards or paper materials.

Buswell (1) found that students who were high in "rate of thinking," as measured by time mental-ability examinations, were also high in rate of comprehension in reading, and also in perceptual factors related to reading. He noted that individuals who were low in "rate of thinking" read at a rate which he felt was higher than could have been normally anticipated. This he attributed to perceptual habits, which may be a compensating factor for slower thinking. It appears that this piece of research would justify the use of machines to improve perceptive skills, were it not for the claim that eye-movements can be trained as effectively by the use of non-instrument timed exercises. Glock (8) compared Harvard films with mechanically controlled paced films (exposing several lines simultaneously) and reading printed matter without any devices, but stressing faster reading. The results of his study with college students indicate that eye-movements were improved under all methods. There was no one method of instruction which was best for all teachers who helped to administer the study.

The Use of Mechanical Devices To Increase Speed of Reading

Above all, instruments have been used in an attempt to increase the rate of reading. It is here that the controversy has been somewhat resolved. The literature indicates (with the usual number of exceptions) that training with mechanical devices re-

sults in greater improvement in reading speed than when no training is given. When non-mechanical timed exercises are used, they usually lead to as effective results as the use of machines.

Cosper and Mills (3) trained college students with the tachistoscope and found that larger gains were made in speed by a comparable group that did not have the tachistoscopic training. There is the possibility that the length of the training period with the machine may not have been of sufficient duration to achieve the desired results. It may also have been that the training material presented on the device was not of a facilitating nature. In three studies already referred to (14, 11, 12), we find that increases were noted in rate as a result of the use of the reading rate controller or the tachistoscope. Larger increments were made by the group (11) which used the reading rate controller rather than the tachistoscope. Manolakes (10) found that Marine officers trained on the reading rate controller made greater reading gains than those officers trained on both the reading rate controller and the tachistoscope. Jackson (9) feels that the student can become too dependent upon a machine. For this reason he advocates using the reading rate controller with a bar that descends over one column of a page, thus offering the reader the opportunity to read half the page using the artificial pacing device and the other half without the mechanical crutch. There is likelihood that this will lead to larger transfer effects, while removing some of the depend-

ency on the bar which may have been built up.

The Place of Tape Recorders in The Teaching of Reading

One type of machine which seems at first glance to have little relationship to reading, but which is being used in classrooms, is the tape recorder. Daniel (4) made use of recordings children made while reading. He feels it aids students to attack new words, to understand the value of punctuation marks, and to organize facts and ideas.

Summary and Conclusions

It seems, therefore, that various types of instruments have their place in the classroom. However, a teacher should not expect a mechanical device to accomplish what has not been achieved by ordinary classroom procedures. There seems little justification to feel that a machine will prove to be a panacea for reading problems. Those teachers whose schools do not provide them with elaborate mechanical devices should not feel dismayed. They will find that timed exercises involving material at the pupil's grade level will achieve results in both rate and comprehension. In the final analysis, there is no second to the development of a program that stresses concept formation, word recognition, and word analysis skills, plus the desire to read. As Witty (15) noted in his recent article on methods and devices, "a wide variety of reading experiences is needed—not the limited practice associated merely with machines or devices . . ." The child who is moti-

vated from within to cooperate with a teacher, who can instruct him in the rudimentary reading skills, will probably read as rapidly and understandingly as is commensurate with his intellectual ability.

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Reading Conference at University of Pittsburgh

The University of Pittsburgh's Eleventh Annual Conference and Course on Reading will be held, July 18—July 29, 1955. The conference will meet in the afternoons from 1:15 p.m. until 4:00 p.m. in the Stephen Foster Memorial Auditorium. The theme of the conference, *Organizing Reading Programs in the Schools*, was selected by those who attended last summer's conference. The Conference will draw its visiting staff from Teacher's College, Columbia University,

Temple University, University of Chattanooga, Ohio University, and the University of Iowa. Dr. Leland Jacobs, Dr. Elona Sochor, Dr. Walter Barbe, Dr. William Cooper, and Dr. Margaret Keyser Hill will be visiting lecturers.

The Conference will be under the direction of Dr. Gerald A. Yoakam, well known authority on Reading, and his staff.

All enrollees may earn two (2) semester hours graduate credit by attending all sessions and writing a critical analysis of the papers presented.

It Pays to Get Ready to Read

by ELEANOR M. JOHNSON

● DIRECTOR OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SERVICES, WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

DO YOU WANT to improve your results in reading at once—today? If so, do more about readiness in every lesson.

What Is Readiness?

Readiness as defined in this article means a background for interpreting the ideas expressed by the author in a story or a particular reading selection.

Successful reading at any level, grade one through college, depends upon readiness for the type of reading to be done. Readiness consists of more than the mere ability to pronounce words, important as that may be. Unless the child has the proper background and vocabulary necessary for understanding what he is to read he cannot succeed.

Readiness applies both to the primary and to the upper grades. It is a factor to be considered throughout the elementary and secondary school life of the pupil. Readiness goes hand in hand with the regular reading program on all levels.

How to Get Ready To Read an Article

Read Titles. Children should read titles and subheads to get an overview of what is coming. A good title can arouse the child's interest, peek his curiosity, and help him anticipate what the story or selection is about. Sub-

heads if well written will deepen the child's interest.

As background for the selection to be read, the teacher will often need to indicate the geographical or historical background, the setting, the situation described, the characters involved, and the mood. This can be done quickly. The pictures often help to give the setting.

Build Associations. To the extent that concepts presented in books are new to pupils, teachers have a responsibility for building associations before reading begins. A reader comprehends and interprets the printed page only to the extent that he has already acquired associations related to the ideas to be found in his reading. The totally unfamiliar "does not register."

Children should be led to recall related experiences. While there is no substitute for concrete experience, children still can learn much through listening to experienced classmates, by asking questions to clear up vague points. Take time to build rich associations for children before they read materials which are relatively unfamiliar.

Read Pictures. Pictures are valuable for supplementing first-hand experiences. They may help to clarify concepts. Several studies show that observation and interpretation of pictures cannot be assumed. It is an ability that needs guidance and training

on ever higher levels. Miller¹ showed that children see few items in a picture; that they frequently miss the main idea.

Too often mere observation of a picture may constitute the two lowest levels of picture reading — merely naming the objects seen in the picture or telling what is happening in the picture.

Children need guidance to “read” pictures on a higher interpretative level. The teacher will aid pupils to use the clues in the illustrations to anticipate time, place, characters, mood, action. The teacher’s questions will help pupils to do some of these things:

- to anticipate what has happened just before the picture.
- to infer time of day or year.
- to imagine what a person is saying, thinking, feeling.
- to reason from cause to effect.
- to make predictions.

If the article to be read is accompanied by maps, charts, graphs, or tables, these should be “read” and interpreted at this time. Training in special skills required to read statistical materials should be developed.

Develop Vocabulary. Vocabulary development is a much greater problem than teaching pupils to pronounce unknown words. This phase of readiness for reading has two distinct parts. The teacher must first help the class to develop essential concepts and secondly to develop independence and versatility in the use of word perception and word recognition skills.

Concepts. Let us take a look at

¹Wm. A. Miller, “What Children See in Pictures,” —*Elementary School Journal*, December 1938, pp. 280-88.

each phase separately. We must make sure that children understand the meanings of words if they are to read with any degree of understanding and satisfaction. Meanings arise out of experiences. The greater a child’s experiences the more words mean to him. To understand the meaning of a word, the individual must somehow come into contact with the experience or set of experiences for which the abstract word stands.

We can provide for a child’s continuous growth in vocabulary meanings:

- (1) Through many first-hand and vicarious experiences given as a part of the whole curriculum.
- (2) Through providing opportunities to express experiences in oral language. Pupils must have opportunities to explain and discuss what they have seen, felt, heard, smelled, tasted.

The resourceful teacher will analyze any reading material in advance and write on the chalkboard any crucial words which may be sources of difficulty. Then she will discuss these words and their meanings with the class. She will encourage the children to recall ideas associated with the words and to use the words in their discussion. She may show selected visual aids when such are available.

The following words were listed by a fourth grade teacher for development before the class read some news about Antarctica.

- (1) Familiar words but unknown concepts: Bottom of the World, white desert, icebergs.

- (2) Unknown words and concepts: aurora australis.
- (3) Possibly vague or incorrect concepts: Polar Regions, plateau, Southern Hemisphere, altitude, Antarctic Circle, Antarctic Continent.

Before pupils read any story or article the teacher needs to develop meanings. In any particular curriculum field, the development of concepts is essential if the child is to read with understanding in that area.

In addition, there is the problem of several meanings for the same word. Pupils need guidance in extending word meanings to discover shades of meaning which some words have in different contexts. The word *get* has 80 different meanings.

Teach Word Recognition Skills. As the meanings of words are developed (as suggested above) be sure pupils pronounce the words accurately. For example, most children omit the first hard *c* in Arctic and Antarctic. Then give help on the various word perception skills which are pertinent to the words (selected from the story) and written on the chalkboard.

The teacher will help children recall and use certain phonic and word analysis skills such as: consonants, consonant blends, vowels, compound words, contractions, endings, prefixes, suffixes, syllables, roots, and so forth.

Word recognition skills are developed as a part of the reading process in a natural reading situation. Usually, these skills will be developed *before* the child reads the selection so that he can give his attention to the thought

when he reads. *When* these skills are developed (before or after the reading) is unimportant. That the child acquire them and be able to use them automatically is very important.

Build Mental Imagery. Some children can read fluently but fail to comprehend well. They should be helped to form mental pictures as they read.

Unfortunately, far too little attention has been given to training pupils on *all* grade levels to visualize details. Children must be trained to build mental pictures as they read, to be aware of the richness of imagery or sensory impressions.

One or two minutes a day (during the readiness activities) will bring big dividends to poor and good pupils alike. From the story to be read, select a few sentences or a paragraph which is full of sensory impressions. As you read the paragraph aloud, ask the pupils to close their eyes and try to see mental pictures for the various words and sentences. Then pupils may discuss their mental pictures of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, feelings. Successive children may add to the picture.

This process is facilitated for some children by having them make pencil drawings of what they see in a passage, or by asking them to close their eyes following a reading and tell what they see. This simple device will promote greater accuracy of comprehension and understanding.

Motivate the Reading. After the above types of readiness are carried out, the children under the teacher's
(Please turn to page 237)

Parents Learn about First-Grade Reading

by DOLORES ELINSKY

● MARY E. FARRELL

M. DOROTHY PENN

PARENTS of first graders at Fulton School* wanted to know about the reading program. How could we, the first-grade teachers, best tell them what we were doing? It was this perennial question which brought us together with our principal and our elementary supervisor. Realizing the potent role which meaningful and enjoyable reading plays in our curriculum and cognizant also of the importance of first-grade reading towards establishing a firm foundation for all later reading, we attempted to plan a program whereby parents of first graders would understand exactly how reading is taught in our schools.

In previous years we had alternated between classroom demonstration lessons and individual group conferences by each of the first-grade teachers. At the time, we felt that each of these practices was the solution to our problem of good public relations. However, upon reflection we found weaknesses in both. Therefore, this year, acting upon the recommendation of our principal, we decided to plan an afternoon program for all of the first-grade parents. Each of the three first-grade teachers would participate.

We arranged our auditorium stage like that of a classroom. On the back curtain we hung several samples of different types of children's work. We chose colorful papers which stood out vividly and mounted them in groups

on large sheets of cardboard. They could be seen from any part of the auditorium. In the foreground we placed our large portable chalkboard. On one side of it were hung charts which showed various related practices which enrich our reading program and on the other side, the five areas of reading readiness to which we referred frequently. On a large table, we displayed two groups of books: (1) the many supplementary pre-primers and primers which are found in all first grades, (2) our own collection of supplementary books, which have been accumulated in the past four years. Several times during the program we mentioned these books. Of course the Big Book, which is the first section of our first pre-primer in chart form, occupied a prominent place on our stage.

Since we were to refer to the basic pre-primers, primer and workbooks many times during the afternoon, we placed a copy of each of these on each seat in the auditorium. We added to these a specially compiled list of suggested supplementary books for first graders which the parents could buy for their children, if they desired. Having these books in the seats gave the parents an opportunity to examine them thoroughly and to become more familiar with them. When particular types of work were developed, it was

*Fulton Elementary School, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Principal, Dr. Louis W. Korona.

quite easy for the parents to turn to specified pages and to see for themselves.

Since three members of the PTA took charge of our classes during that afternoon, we were able to hold a two-hour program during the afternoon session. We divided the program into three parts:

- Reading Readiness—Its relation to the whole first grade program.
- Beginning Reading—Techniques and materials involved.
- Related Practices — Techniques and methods of developing the skills.

Each first-grade teacher explained one phase of the program. Following are excerpts of the main points which were developed in each area:

Reading Readiness

As is true in all learning situations, a period of readiness or preparedness must precede instruction in the basic subject of reading itself. Actually this readiness begins very early in the child's life. While readiness as a whole for specific types of reading continues forever, readiness for first-grade reading is achieved whenever the children are reasonably adept in each of the following areas: (1) ability to use language, (2) ability to listen carefully, (3) ability to observe carefully, (4) ability to remember, and (5) ability to interpret.

The Ability to Use Language

A very important phase of readiness is the use of language. Most five-year-olds can understand the language to a fair degree but the ability to use the

language, understand the words, and make adequate sentences varies from child to child. All children need the opportunity to develop richer vocabularies, adequate language patterns, and correct speech habits. These good language patterns are encouraged in informal discussions. When a youngster talks about his pet or experience at the fire station he needs to speak clearly so that the other children can understand him and to express himself well so that they will listen with interest.

Picture sequences help children learn to express ideas in sequence. Discussions about experiences or pictures help children increase the ability to identify persons and things and to develop a broader vocabulary. Stories and poems read aloud always present a good chance for youngsters to hear good language patterns and to add new words to their vocabularies. Poetry also encourages a feeling for rhythm and picturesque phrases.

The Ability to Listen Carefully

Another part of getting ready to read is learning to listen carefully and to distinguish the sounds that make up words. The initial step is to hear differences in sounds. Children learn that some sounds are high in pitch and others are low. They use their ears in musical games, rhythms, and games that develop auditory ability.

The next step is to listen to the sounds of words. Children learn to detect words that rhyme and words that begin with the same sound. Poems that use a great deal of alliteration are the favorites of children and they help to give this development.

Ability to Observe Carefully

Accurate visual discrimination is also essential to reading. The children have to see the words in order to read them. The eyes must be trained to move properly across a page. Words must be kept in focus and the children must be taught to distinguish the tiny marks that make one word different from the other. Following a sequence of pictures that tells a continued story is particularly valuable in establishing the habit of looking from left to right. Many games are played that call for matching colors, looking from left to right, spotting differences between pictures or objects and especially noticing details. Gradually the habit of comparing details leads to the ability to notice the tiny differences between letters and between words.

Ability to Remember

Closely connected with learning to read is the ability to remember. A child has to remember what he sees in order to read. He also has to remember what he reads in order to understand and follow stories. A child's power to remember may be strengthened so that it can be used to its greatest capacity. For example, the children look at a large picture and notice the details about the picture. The picture is then taken away and they are asked if they can remember something in the picture or tell what the story was about. The children enjoy playing various games which help to strengthen memory. They may be asked to name the objects they saw on the table before they were hidden from view, or to tell which one of the objects was taken away. Directions can be given which

will challenge them to remember things they hear. A series of two or three or more directions are given as children grow in their ability to follow them.

Ability to Interpret

Interpretation is also a very important part of readiness. Pictures and experiences aid here, too. Children learn to think about what comes next and to make up a logical ending when studying a series of pictures.

They also learn to interpret as they discuss their experiences in science and social studies, and share what they have observed and learned with others.

All these abilities are essential prerequisites for reading. But the teacher realizes that reading is an individual matter. Therefore, the length of time devoted to this part of the program depends upon the needs of the individual child. Activities to bring out each of the skills continue daily, gradually increasing in difficulty until the teacher is satisfied that the child is ready for the actual reading process.

Beginning Reading

The children continue at their own rate of learning, working in small groups with others who are at about the same level of ability. While these groups usually represent the average, above average, and slower learners, at no time in the classroom is the children's attention directed to the differences in the groups, either directly or indirectly. That is, the groups are not labeled first, second, and third according to ability. Instead they are called Bobby's group or Mary's group and frequently these names are changed so

that another child feels important as the leader of his group. The children progress at their own level of ability. In this way each child receives the greatest possible amount of individual attention from the teacher and is not competing with those of higher ability. As can be seen, these groups continue to be quite flexible. Since the entire room uses the same basic series, it is a relatively simple matter to move a child from one group to another as he improves. A slow beginning does not necessarily mean a slow ending.

Words are presented as a whole in our reading program. This method is often the cause of much controversy, largely because it is not clearly understood. On one side of our portable chalkboard was hung a large card holder, which is used in all first grades. The first lesson in the pre-primer was taught to the parents in exactly the same manner as is done with first graders. Holding up a picture of Dick, the teacher called his name and talked about him. Then she put the flash card, "Dick," into the holder. Next she showed "Dick" in the Big Book. She developed the rest of the story in the same way and called attention to the fact that the word in the book and that in the card holder were exactly the same. She emphasized the fact that the Big Book, as its name implies, has big colorful pictures and large print and so can be used for distance reading by the group in beginning reading. This eliminates the necessity of having the children hold individual books, turn to the correct page, and keep the place.

It also avoids the eye strain involved in looking from an individual book to the words on the board and back again to the book. As the children see the whole word on a card and again see the whole word on the printed page, they begin to build up an affinity to the whole word. Words presented in this manner are much more meaningful and are remembered longer than words presented as abstract combinations of letters and sounds.

Repetition is another technique which is used. But the repetition is always in meaningful and varied situations. This results in thoughtful, interpretative reading. Again and again, parents were reminded that hearing words must precede reading words, for unless spoken words can be understood and interpreted correctly, their printed symbols will be meaningless to the child.

The place of the "Morning News" in first grade was discussed. This is a time set aside each morning for discussion of such topics as the day of the week, the weather, approaching holidays or birthdays, and interesting experiences of the children. Actually, it is a time for exchanging information among the children and for contributing and learning to listen. After the first few weeks of school the teacher writes simple sentences about these topics on the board so that once more the children will see that reading is an essential part of our living and that it can be fun, especially when one is reading about things that pertain to him and his classmates.

Related Practices

As the child learns basic words by sight, the teacher must always be sure that he is not merely memorizing them. Therefore, there are many related practices and drills and types of seat-work which accompany this reading in order to make it more meaningful. A workbook is given to each child. It is closely correlated with the reader and attempts to give each child another practical opportunity to use his newly acquired skills. The parents examined the workbooks. As was true in the reader, the action of the first few pages of these books is carried largely in pictures. But gradually the pictures diminish in importance and the printed words come into the foreground. At the end of each group of stories, the parents scanned a page of words only. In answer to their queries, the procedure involved in the word tests was explained. Here, they were told, is the crucial test. It shows whether children can actually discriminate between words or whether they have gotten by so far by relying merely upon pictures or memory.

Phonics help the reading process and are taught in the Pittsburgh public schools. They are used at a time when children have need and can best understand them. Even while children are learning a sufficient number of sight words, they are learning to analyze parts of words. They must listen for words that start the same, or end the same, or rhyme.

To illustrate how this is accomplished, the attention of the parents was directed to three word charts. The

first dwelled upon words which merely started the same, i.e., *baby, ball, boat; Sally, see, Spot*. Through repetition, eventually, children associate the sounds of particular letters with these sight words and so are able to begin to attack independently new words which start like these old familiar ones.

On the second chart the emphasis was upon word endings. The children must look beyond the first letter or two in a word. Several words which ended alike such as *comes, jumps, runs*, etc. were cited.

The third chart developed rhyming words. Here again the fact was emphasized that hearing rhymes must precede reading rhymes. The parents turned to a specific page in the workbook where they saw nothing but pictures. Out of every three pictures, there were two which rhymed. Together, the parents named three of the pictures and then renamed only the two which rhymed. After enough time has been spent in developing auditory acuity for rhymes with the children, they are presented with the words only. As the chart showed, such words as *run* and *sun, jump* and *bump, cat* and *sat* are a source of delight to the children when they are able to read them.

Through these various exercises then, the children are continually growing toward the goal of successful independent reading. Every sight word becomes a guide for discovering some new strange word.

Before the conclusion the parents were asked to join in a little experi-

ment to see just how involved beginning reading actually can be. Very often parents become annoyed when their children fail to remember a word which they have been told or when their children can't seem to grasp the fact that an *S* is an *S* or a *T* a *T*. What these parents don't know is that isolated letters have little significance to young children. To parents, who have had long years to establish the habit of combining such letters and sounds, recognizing printed words seems easy. However, for beginning readers, these words must be presented gradually with much meaning attached to each word. For most children mastering a basic sight vocabulary is a slow process. Even bright, fluent-speaking boys and girls may have considerable difficulty in remembering word forms at first. This again is the reason for advancing at the child's own level of ability. Otherwise he would be easily discouraged and find reading too hard. Then reading to him would not be a matter of success, but rather failure.

Therefore, using a strange set of symbols, completely different from *ABC's*, the teacher attempted to build a sight vocabulary of ten words for the parents. She presented the new words in exactly the same manner as common words are taught to first graders. She utilized flash cards, a big book and conversation to present the first story to the parents.

Needless to say, the parents were bewildered. They couldn't understand these strange symbols. To tell them that one word started just like a former one was to no avail. In most cases they

had already forgotten what the first one said. When they were asked to read a list of these words without benefit of any pictures, they realized the great difficulty for the first time and were able to sympathize with their youngsters' reading difficulties.

All of them agreed that reading is certainly a complex process, and that the groundwork for good reading was established in the first grade. This same pattern of procedure, they were told, is continued in the second and third grades, with the work increasing in difficulty.

At the conclusion of the teachers' presentation the main points brought out in the discussion were summarized and the parents were urged to ask questions. They were most enthusiastic and their questions indicated a genuine interest, appreciation, and understanding of the reading program.

Partly in answer to their questions and in anticipation of others, the following list of helpful suggestions was given to each parent.

1. Give children plenty of experiences—not necessarily complex but meaningful and interesting ones.
2. Maintain a relaxed, comfortable atmosphere at home.
 - a. Make the child feel important.
 - b. Give him a chance to talk.
 - c. Talk with him—not always to him.
3. Be enthusiastic about school. Talk encouragingly about it. Build up an interest.
4. Answer your children's questions. Answers needn't be in-

volved or detailed.

5. Develop a feeling of independence in the child. Praise him often.
6. Encourage your child to participate in games and to play with other children.
7. Interest your child in things in which he should be interested.
8. Teach children correct names of people and things.
9. Read to the children often. Sing with them and play with them.
10. Encourage children to associate people and places; times and events.
11. Let the children see you reading often. Let them feel that you enjoy it.
12. Provide materials similar to those in school—paste, paper, scissors, paint. Didn't you like them when you were in school?
13. Encourage, and if necessary, be forceful in teaching children to follow directions and to pay attention.
14. Show the child that books aren't the only kind of reading. Magazines, packages, letters, road signs, etc. are other sources.
15. Accept and respect your child. You will be proud of him some day.
16. Be patient. Remember that these little folks have a lot to learn. Make this learning enjoyable.

As we look back upon this year's reading orientation program for par-

ents of first-grade children, we feel that it was successful and profitable. The parents have come to know what we are doing in reading for their children. As the result, we feel, that they will be more sympathetic and understanding of their children's reading progress.

• • •

Annual Assembly Meeting To Be Held in Pittsburgh

The Annual Assembly of the International Council for the Improvement of Reading Instruction will be held at the University of Pittsburgh, Saturday, May 7, 1955.

The program for the day will be as follows:

9:30-11:30 Open Meeting in the Stephen Foster Memorial Auditorium. *Controversial Issues in Reading* will be discussed by Dr. William S. Gray, Dr. Paul Witty and Dr. Gerald A. Yoakam. A panel discussion will follow, giving members of the audience an opportunity to ask questions. Dr. Emmett A. Betts will give a summarization of the panel discussion.

12:00 Luncheon in the Faculty Club Dining Room.

1:30 A combined meeting of the Assembly (representatives from Local Councils) and the Board of Directors. Each Local Council may send one representative for each 50 members or fraction thereof to this meeting.

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WHAT RESEARCH SAYS TO THE TEACHER OF READING

HELEN M. ROBINSON
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Reading Readiness

MOST KINDERGARTEN and first-grade teachers are very much concerned with readiness for beginning reading. In recent years, many school people have extended the concept of readiness to upper levels of reading. However, a survey of the research reveals that the majority of studies have been concentrated at the beginning periods.

Research has shown clearly that there are many differences among children at any given age level. In fact, pupils at age six will be found to vary in almost any characteristic except age. It is this knowledge that led teachers to abandon life age *per se*, as a measure of readiness to begin to read. Instead, both teachers and investigators have attempted to identify and subsequently to measure factors upon which learning to read depend.

One of these factors which has received a great deal of attention is intelligence. Most studies agree that a mental age of six and one-half years is conducive to success in beginning reading. However, experience reveals that some children with mental ages below six make progress in reading while others with higher mental ages do not. If the content is very simple and relates to the appropriate interest and experience of pupils, they may

learn to read more readily with lower mental ages. It is clear, however, that factors other than those measured by current intelligence tests must be considered in evaluating reading readiness.

Since reading is a function of language development, it is not surprising that research has established a close relationship between language and reading. However, objective measures of many areas of language growth have not been developed. An examination of several reading readiness tests reveals that language is usually appraised by samples of word meanings and sometimes sentence length or meanings. Yet it is agreed that ability to relate stories, to report what has been seen or heard, and ability to speak clearly are important. The latter must be judged by the teacher informally. The relative significance of each of the facets of language to beginning reading has not been established.

Visual discrimination is usually appraised by one part of reading readiness tests, but the kinds of measures vary considerably. A recent study¹ used 14 experimental tests of visual perception and identified two major visual perception factors related to

¹Jean Turner Goins, "Visual Perceptual Abilities and Tachistoscope Training Related to Reading Progress," Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1953.

reading success in first grade. Furthermore, a bimodal curve on some of these tests suggests that there were two types of perceivers among the 20 first-grade pupils. The fact that several of these tests predicted first-grade reading achievement as well as the intelligence tests supports the conclusion that visual perception is a significant factor in reading readiness.

Auditory discrimination has been shown to be a requisite for successful beginning reading, and gross measures are included in some reading readiness tests. Auditory discrimination is usually closely related to speech and language development at this level, but it is probably equally important in listening. Future research in listening should establish more exactly the role of auditory discrimination on the beginning stages of word recognition.

Emotional maturity, which is not clearly defined except in descriptive terms, is considered to be an essential aspect of reading readiness. But research has yet to provide more accurate testing techniques before we learn about specific relationships.

Social maturity is undoubtedly related to reading achievement. For example, at Grade I, Orear² found a significant relationship between behavioral attitudes, as measured by the Munn scale and success in beginning reading.

Girls appear to be ready to read earlier and to make better initial progress than do boys. Konski³ measured reading readiness in twelve selected

areas, and no significant sex differences were found. However, by the end of first grade, girls scored significantly higher than boys on reading tests. It seems clear, therefore, that as teachers, we must continue to search for reasons why girls excel boys at these early levels and in the meantime, we may have to change our expectations somewhat for boys.

Left-handedness and various types of mixed hand-eye-preference have been studied by many investigators with differing conclusions. A study⁴ of kindergarten and entering first-grade pupils in the Laboratory School at the University of Chicago, revealed that preference *per se* had no significant effect on reading progress during the early school years.

Experts in reading and successful classroom teachers point out that a child must have a real desire to learn to read, which he demonstrates by enjoying picture books, inquiring about what words say, etc. Research concerning this aspect of readiness has been meager.

Many studies have shown that most children entering school are farsighted and therefore not ready for prolonged periods of activities requiring near vision. As children grow older, fewer remain farsighted, until by adolescence they tend to become near-

²Margaret Louise Orear, "Social Maturity and First-Grade Achievement," *California Journal of Educational Research*, II (March, 1951) 84-88.

³Virginia J. Konski, "An Investigation into Differences between Boys and Girls in Selected Reading Readiness Areas and in Reading Achievement," Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Missouri, 1961.

⁴Lillian P. Stevenson and Helen M. Robinson, "Eye-Hand Preference, Reversals, and Reading Progress," *Clinical Studies in Reading* II, p. 83-88, Supplementary Educational Monographs, No. 77. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953.

sighted. Some authorities agree that the eye has not reached maturity at age six, while others support the conclusion that near activities, such as reading, cause the eyes to adjust to this activity, resulting in near-sightedness. There is sufficient evidence available to conclude that visual screening tests should be given to young children so that those who need visual care may have it early to prevent failure.

The foregoing brief discussion of some of the factors of reading readiness points up the fact that tests, such as those of intelligence and reading readiness, must be supplemented by careful observation by teachers. Furthermore, a careful evaluation, or weighing of each factor is essential to determine when each child is ready for instruction.

If children are not deemed ready for reading, teachers often wonder if waiting a year or two to allow more time for maturation is advisable. Scott⁵ found that direct instruction in reading readiness classes was more effective than kindergarten or no preparatory program. Direct implication may be drawn from the report on army illiterates. Goldberg⁶ stated that it was necessary to initiate a reading readiness program for these men. The program included exercises to motivate language expression, to train visual memory and discrimination, and auditory memory and discrimination. This

evidence does not support the conclusion that reading readiness develops with age, but rather, that direct instruction is more likely to be effective.

The reports of research and its implications for teachers have been concentrated at the early levels. Today we must rely heavily upon teacher-judgment and the results of reading achievement tests to determine readiness for instruction in various stages of reading beyond the beginning level. Research is urgently needed to identify the factors and develop appropriate measures for readiness at higher levels.

It Pays to Get Ready to Read

(Continued from page 226)

guidance usually set up purposes for reading the story. Now they have the necessary background, concepts, and word perception skills to take to the first silent reading of the content. Interest has been aroused and children anticipate the story to be read with eagerness and pleasurable curiosity.

Summary

The time given to readiness activities is not a waste of time. It can speed up the remainder of the reading lesson. In a 30-minute period, the breakdown could be (1) readiness—10 minutes, silent reading—10 minutes, discussion and critical thinking—10 minutes.

Readiness activities (as suggested above) require *real* teaching and guidance so desperately needed by children today on all grade levels. Good and poor readers make tremendous progress under such a program. It pays to get ready.

⁵Carrie M. Scott, "An Evaluation of Training in Readiness Classes," *Elementary School Journal*, XLIII, (September, 1947) 26-32.

⁶Samuel Goldberg, *Army Training of Illiterates in World War II*, Teacher College Contributions to Education, No. 966. New York: Columbia University, 1951.

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WHAT OTHER PERIODICALS ARE SAYING ABOUT READING

MURIEL POTTER

MICHIGAN STATE NORMAL COLLEGE

"Reading Interests and Informational Needs of Children in Grades Four to Eight." J. Harlan Shores. *Elementary English*, December, 1954.

This article describes a study of "what children are looking up in books, what they want to find out about, and what they want to read about." The attitudes of teachers, parents, and librarians were also canvassed to find whether the adults were in agreement with the children on their needs and interests.

Questionnaires were distributed in 270 communities for response by children, and additional questionnaires sent to librarians in or near these communities. The communities were selected from the nine census regions of the United States and from a random selection of rural, urban, and metropolitan areas. The sampling included all socio-economic levels. The response to the questionnaires was very high—73 per cent; "6,313 pupils in grades four through eight, 4,531 parents of these pupils, 212 teachers and 169 librarians returned usable questionnaires."

The results in terms of children's reading interests agree on the whole with previous studies, although the sex differences previously reported were less clear-cut in this study. Parents expressed the desire to have children choose reference books to read, as well

as books on ethics and religion. Librarians wanted children to read biographies. Adults' choices for children did not show the same trends through the grades as the children's own choices. Although the children showed few differences in choices as a result of living in different population centers, their parents' choices for them differed with residence in rural or metropolitan areas. These differences are described in detail.

On the whole, children wish to read, and parents wish them to read, the same things, but as may be expected, all the adults are in greater agreement than the children are in agreement with the adults. The adults can predict the interests of the children fairly accurately, though their opinions differ. The differences among the adults in their understanding of children's reading interests are described.

Science topics are among the categories most frequently asked about by children. They ask more questions about ethical values and religion as they progress through the elementary grades, and become more concerned with their personal problems, especially vocations and boy-girl relationships. Residence in a particular kind of population center strongly influences the kind of questions asked by the children, but not the number. There are distinct differences appearing in the

kinds of questions asked by girls and by boys.

Parents and upper grade teachers both want children to ask questions concerning their personal problems, and, on the whole, children ask questions about the things that parents, teachers, and librarians want them to ask about. But children do not ask questions about the same things they want to read about, nor do the adults want them to ask questions about the things they read about. This relationship between reading interests and questions is discussed in detail.

In the use of reference materials, children most frequently look up science information. They look up material about formal school subjects, about famous people, and about social studies. Boys and girls differ in the topics they most frequently look up. Librarians report look-up behavior in areas of hobbies, crafts, and collections as well as in those mentioned by the children, their parents, and their teachers. Children look up topics different from the ones they ask about.

Professor Shores points out the implications of these findings for publishers of children's reading materials, school personnel, and parents. These are too important to paraphrase. A careful examination of them is recommended for the consideration of all teachers, librarians, parents and all adults interested in children and their reading-authors and publishers in particular.

"The Role of Pronouncing and Sounding in Learning to Read." Gertrude H. Hildreth. *Elementary School Journal*, November 1954.

Dr. Hildreth emphasizes in her article the importance of "partial sounding clues combined with skill in inferring words from context," which she points out is especially valuable for children in intermediate grades and beyond. She advocates the "look and say" method for reading beginners, because of the effective way in which it develops rhythmic eye movements and rapid comprehension, and establishes the correct relationships between speech and reading. She recommends a "maximum of oral activity" for beginning readers, saying frankly, "It would be farfetched to require only silent reading of normal-hearing children . . . All reading for the normal-hearing beginner is actually oral reading." These statements are going to make some teachers in primary grades heave sighs of relief, since beginning readers will read orally in spite of all teachers' efforts to make the distinction between reading aloud and reading silently in first grade.

Dr. Hildreth points out that *sounding* is no longer a necessary first step in learning to read, and that drill on letter sounds and word parts may result in increasing the difficulty of recognizing words, as sometimes appears in the performance of retarded readers. The last part of her article is a set of recommendations for teaching sounding and word pronunciation effectively. Her concluding comment is a recommendation for further research in the area of word recognition and its teaching.

"Groups in Reading." E. W. Dolch. *Elementary English*, December 1954.

This straightforward and sensible article is recommended reading for all teachers interested in improving their own teaching ability as well as the reading ability of their pupils. After analyzing the whole-room, two-group, and three-group methods of teaching in a fresh and original manner, notable for its constructive approach to each, he summarizes by pointing out the relationship between methods of grouping and such factors as the number of children in the room, the ability of the teacher to handle large numbers of children and her skill in coping with a wide range of reading ability within any single group. He stresses also the effect of grouping on children's attitudes, the necessity for the teacher's being sensitive to these attitudes, and the influence of local tradition on community attitudes toward methods of teaching. Professor Dolch urges teachers to select their grouping procedures in a spirit of experimentation, and to make judgments about results only when sincere effect has been exerted to make each procedure effective.

"Reading the Comics: A Summary of Studies and an Evaluation. I." Paul A. Witty and Robert A. Sizemore. *Elementary English*, December 1954.

This article is devoted to a survey of findings on the amount and kind of reading of comics among children of elementary and high school age. It is particularly readable because the studies are discussed in chronological sequence over the approximately 20 years during which comics have influenced children's and adults' reading.

"Reading the Comics: A Summary of Studies and an Evaluation. II." Paul Witty and Robert A. Sizemore. *Elementary English*, January 1955.

In this second article on comics, studies are reviewed which have examined the attitudes of children toward comics and the reading interests of children which are satisfied by comics. In interviews and questionnaires children have given many reasons why they read comics. Studies over a period of more than ten years are consistent in reporting that comics provide adventure, suspense, humor, escape from reality, and that they are read because they are available and cheap. Of course adults present equally good reasons why comics have undesirable features: their lack of literary quality, their aesthetic unattractiveness, the immaturity or objectionable nature of their content, their unreality, and their tendency to crowd out more desirable reading experiences.

This survey is also concerned with a consideration of the values of comics and the constructive uses that may be made of them. Witty suggests that each comics magazine must be considered on its own merits, and that general condemnation is not necessary. Thorndike has pointed out that the comics provide reading experience of a level of difficulty like that of upper elementary school readers. A study of the effect on reading comprehension and vocabulary by Edith Sperzel showed no effect, good or bad, as a result of reading comics with or without direction for thirty minutes a day

for six weeks. A study by Florence Heisler, comparing children who read most comics, saw most movies, and listened to most radio serials with those who read fewest comics, saw fewest movies, and listened least to radio serials, showed no difference in adjustment between the two groups. The second group owned more books than the first group, however.

Other studies of equal interest are described. The authors conclude that as yet there is no evidence that children's vocabularies and reading comprehension are injured by reading comics, but on the other hand, little or no gain is the result of reading them. From the standpoint of visual welfare, comics are undesirable; many are poorly printed on cheap paper, and the type is too small and the drawings are poor. But again, each single publication must be considered on its merits.

The third and concluding section of this very interesting survey appeared in the February issue of *Elementary English*. Do look for it!

Promoting Maximal Reading Growth Among Able Learners. Helen M. Robinson, Editor. Supplementary Educational Monographs, Number 8. University of Chicago Press. December 1954.

All too little has been available in the literature of the teaching of reading on how to guide and extend the reading ability of gifted children. Until recently little attention has been given to the fact that, if we are to interpret correctly the recommendation to meet the needs of children for guidance in

reading at the levels at which we find them, we must be prepared to give guidance to advanced and satisfactorily progressing readers as well as retarded ones.

This collection of articles, from papers originally delivered at the University of Chicago Reading Conference in June, 1954, is the first body of material, to the knowledge of this writer, that provides detailed discussion of the problems of reading instruction for the gifted child. Each article, moreover, is an excellent general discussion of the teaching of some aspects of reading. It would appear that there are good teaching procedures, applicable for all levels of material and all rates of learning ability, which the skillful teacher uses in such a way that level, amount, and interpretation of content are suited to the ability of each child.

The editor and the writers of these articles are to be congratulated on the excellence of this publication.

"Introducing a Remedial Reading Program." D. Lewis Edwards and E. W. Dolch. *Elementary English*, January 1955.

The writers of this excellent article have begun by pointing out the psychological necessity for the *success* of any remedial reading program undertaken by a school system, because of the detrimental effect on plans for long range remedial instruction in any community where such a program is judged to have failed. In order to make every possible provision for success, it is vitally important to give the remedial teacher full responsibility for the *selec-*

tion of the children who are to receive help, the *planning* of the program to meet their needs, and the *scheduling* of work periods. The writers emphasize the importance of a good public relations program in connection with such a project, and the need for an effective system of record-keeping which is economical and permanent.

They are strongly opposed to teacher recommendations as the method of referral for reading assistance and give cogent reasons therefor. They suggest beginning with an oral reading test for each child, administered by the remedial teacher, and then describe how the administrative problems presented by such individual testing can be overcome. They urge that each classroom teacher be given a statement about the performance of her pupils on the diagnostic reading tests, information as to which of them have been selected for special help, some explanation of the limitations of the tests used, and the reasons why the pupils selected were chosen.

Mental ability of children selected for special reading help may be estimated by the use of the *Otis Alpha Quick-Scoring Mental Ability Test*, which requires no reading and may be given to groups. Later intelligence testing, if necessary, should be done by specialists. Again, teachers should be informed of their pupils' performance on such tests, and given some understanding of the limitations of the test results.

A simple and ingenious plan for reporting the results of the reading survey and intelligence tests is presented. A system of assigning each

child a priority rating in the program is developed by considering two aspects of his performance—the degree of his reading retardation and the extent to which he can respond to remedial reading aid, as indicated by his intelligence test performance. The reports from participating schools can easily be compiled into an annual report and condensed to the very simple and satisfactory form presented in the article.

The writers feel that the remedial teacher should be given the full responsibility in planning and scheduling because she best understands the needs of the children. They recommend that the maximum number in a group be six, because of the amount of individual planning and selection of reading material that is necessary if the instruction is to be effective. It is also important because in small groups children can be helped to understand *why* they are pursuing particular activities, thus obtaining both motivation and insight. As to the amount of time spent in instruction, bi-weekly periods of 20 to 25 minutes are regarded as adequate if all the time is actually spent in reading activities. This is believed to contribute to the development of self-direction by the pupils and to place a relatively light burden on the school. It is recommended that classroom help of a coordinated sort be given by classroom teachers and classroom helpers, and that parents also participate. Some children may need daily reading instruction, and they may be placed on the schedule twice.

The suggestions for scheduling are sensible and concrete. It is suggested that preparation periods for the children should not be scheduled at the beginning or end of periods of instruction, because less time is lost in changing groups if one group "pushes the other group out." Daily preparation should be scheduled apart from actual instruction periods, and adequate time set aside by the remedial teacher for conferences with parents, office work, homecalls, and the preparation of reports. At least one-half day a week is suggested for these purposes. A maximum case load of 50 children is recommended.

The planner should be acquainted with the general routine of each school participating in the program, and take pains to avoid time conflicts with the work of other special teachers. Teachers whose pupils will participate in the program should be interviewed while the schedule is still tentative, in order that they may be informed of all plans, but it is recommended that the remedial teacher maintain her status as a special teacher, and feel no obligation to "give way" in case of an objection or request for change in a child's schedule. This is necessary in order to impress the school with the importance of the program and to emphasize its prestige and hence its value.

In grouping the children, it is suggested that groups be either divided equally as to the number of girls and boys, or made up of only one sex. Age

and class levels should also be relatively homogeneous, because children are more comfortable in such groups and more easily make friends in their groups. Finally, the priority factor must be considered. Although the writers do not say so explicitly, the remedial teacher must be a flexible and sensitive person in her dealings with both adults and children, ready to make changes in group personnel and size, or otherwise adjust her plans to children's needs.

During the program all adults involved will be eager for information about its progress, and the writers offer to interested teachers on request forms and materials which they have developed in the course of the administration of such a remedial program. Most of this material is mimeographed.

With regard to public relations, it is suggested that the program be explained to teachers in a meeting at the earliest possible time after it is undertaken. Teachers should have individual conferences regarding their pupils who are in the program. Parents can be reached through church groups, PTA meetings, and civic organizations. Participation in meetings of such groups should be planned for the remedial teacher by school administrators and supervisors.

An invaluable article, which has needed writing these many years. Reports would be most helpful if available.

Listing Some Good Books

READING IN THE SCIENCE FIELD

NANCY LARRICK

Whether you introduce reading into the science class or science into the reading class, the advantages are tremendous. For the great majority of children are keenly interested in the various segments of the vast content area known as science. And there are rich and valuable science materials for almost every reading level.

However, reading a science book is very much different from reading a story about a boy and his pony. The latter will probably use familiar words to present familiar concepts. But the science book will undoubtedly use many special terms to introduce new concepts, and that makes reading difficult if we are to assume that reading is synonymous with understanding.

Suppose the nine-year-old begins to read about dinosaurs. He is asked to push time back 150 million years, to imagine a world of swamps and lowlands, and to picture great monsters as tall as a two-story house lumbering through ferns forty feet high. To read about this scene, he has to understand such words as *fossil*, *prehistoric*, *brontosaurus*, *diplodocus*, and a host of others.

These words may be so strange to him and the concepts so remote from his experience that he will become lost unless he has special help with reading in this area. Understanding such a term as *fossil* means more than

"sounding it out," important as that may be. It means getting the full significance of what a fossil is, how it was made, where it may be found, what it tells us, and so on.

Actually some textbooks compress so much information into a limited space that the full, rich significance of such a term as *fossil* is only suggested. The definition may be given so briefly that it is not meaningful and never becomes a part of the child's consciousness.

As enrichment for the textbook material, many teachers are introducing a variety of children's books that deal with the same or related subjects. If the class is studying about the world in prehistoric times, for example, many of the children can enrich their reading by reporting on the feature that appeared in *Life* a year and a half ago. Others will want to explore certain articles that have appeared in the magazine *Junior Natural History*. Still others will search the current library lists for books about dinosaurs and other strange beasts of the past.

Through this extensive reading, children will have a better opportunity to absorb the full meaning of the new concepts they are facing in science and the new terms they must use. Thus, through wide reading the whole science field can become more significant to them. And because science is a

Number One interest with present-day children, they are likely to stretch their reading muscles to the limit when they have the opportunity to explore science books on their level. Thus science assumes deeper, richer meaning when there is the opportunity for extensive reading. And reading skills increase with practice in an area of great interest.

Fortunately, there are many non-fiction books of science for children of all ages. They are carefully written and illustrated and, each book has the added advantage of being devoted only to one segment of the big general subject. Name almost any child's science question and there is a book

about it—animal tracks, for example, or snow or water or hamsters or space ships or whales or television. Each of these topics is the subject for a whole book that explains the special terms for that subject and enlarges on the shades of meaning until the full concepts are really understood.

An excellent list of science books for children is included in the new edition of the *Bibliography of Children's Books* published in 1954 by the Association for Childhood Education International, 1200 15th St., N.W., Washington 5, D. C. (Price, \$1.25.)

As a sample of the possibilities in this field, twenty books for children to explore are listed on the next page:

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Children's Books in the Science Field

FOR THE PRIMARY GRADES

Bendick, Jeanne, *All Around You*. McGraw-Hill, 1951. A science picture book that tells the why and how of the world around us.

Huntington, Harriet E., *Let's Go Outdoors*. Doubleday, 1941. Photos and brief text for each subject such as snails, turtles, ants, bees, polliwogs, caterpillars, etc.

Ipcar, Dahlov, *Animal Hide and Seek*. Scott, 1947. The story of animal camouflage.

Larrick, Nancy, *See for Yourself*. Aladdin, 1952. Easy science experiments with air, heat, and water.

Selsam, Millicent. *Play with Plants*. Morrow, 1949. Experiments with plants.

Webber, Irma, *Bits That Grow Big*. Scott, 1949. Simple information about seeds.

Zolotow, Charlotte, *The Storm Book*. Words and pictures tell of a summer storm over city, countryside, and seashore.

FOR THE INTERMEDIATE GRADES

Andrews, Roy Chapman, *All About Dinosaurs*. Random House, 1953. Scientifically accurate report of various kinds of dinosaurs and the world they lived in.

Bronson, Wilfred, *Wonder World of Ants*. Harcourt, 1937. Different kinds of ants and how they live.

Coggins, Jack, and Pratt, Fletcher, *By Space Ship to the Moon*. Random

House, 1952. The first and most probable steps man will take in space travel.

Cormack, M. B., *The First Book of Stones*. Information for beginning collectors.

Earle, Olive L. *Birds and Their Nests*. Morrow, 1952. Forty-two varieties of birds and their nests.

Levine, Milton and Seligman, Jean H., *A Baby Is Born, The Story of How Life Begins*. Simon and Shuster, 1949. Simple explanation, well illustrated.

Mason, George F., *Animal Homes*. Morrow, 1948. Where animals live, raise their young and store their food.

Schneider, Herman, *Everyday Weather and How It Works*. McGraw-Hill, 1951. The what, why, and how of weather with easy experiments.

Schneider, Herman and Nina, *Let's Look Under the City*. Scott, 1950. Explanation of water, gas, waste, electricity, and telephone carriers under the city.

Ravielli, Anthony, *Wonders of the Human Body*. Viking, 1954. Clear, concise explanation.

Webb, Addison, *Song of the Seasons*. Morrow, 1950. The year-round doings of familiar woodland animals.

White, Anne Terry, *All About the Stars*. Random House, 1948. The wonders of stars, planets, constellations.

Zim, Herbert, *Snakes*. Morrow, 1949. Facts about the snakes of North America.



IN THE

GINN BASIC READERS

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Reading Workshop

The Third Annual Workshop in Reading will be held at the University of Chicago from July 5 through July 29, 1955. The Workshop is open to teachers, supervisors, administrators, librarians, and remedial teachers of reading. The topics discussed will be broad in scope and include problems listed by each registrant. Sections are planned at all levels. Staff includes: Dr. E. W. Dolch, Dr. Mary C. Austin, Miss Mildred Letton, Dr. William S. Gray, and Dr. Helen M. Robinson.

Registration in the Workshop is equivalent to five semester hours. Additional information and application blanks may be secured by writing to Mrs. Helen M. Robinson, 5835 Kimbark Avenue, Chicago 37, Illinois.

Cornell Reading Conference and Workshop

Cornell University announces both a conference and a workshop for teachers, supervisors, and administrators during its summer session. The conference is scheduled for July 6-9. Opportunities for observation of reading activities will be provided.

The Reading Workshop is scheduled for July 6-22. The participants will also attend the Reading Conference through July 9. During the two weeks following the Conference, small work groups will meet with workshop staff members to pursue their special interests. Three semester hours of credit may be earned in the workshop.

News of Local Councils

Local Councils are urged to send news of their meetings and plans for the future to Miss Josephine Tronsberg, Reading Laboratory, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh 13, Pennsylvania, who is Local Council Editor.

• • •

The Chicago Area Council, Chicago, Illinois, sponsored a joint meeting of the A.S.C.D. and I.C.I.R.I. at the convention in Chicago on March 5. The theme of the meeting was Reading and Child Development. Mrs. Dilla MacBean, director of school libraries, Chicago, discussed, "The Values of Reading in Meeting the Needs of Children and Youth." Dr. Ruth Strickland talked about "The Relation of Reading to Development in the Language Arts." Dr. Paul Witty spoke on the "Interrelations of Reading and Other Mass Media in Child Development."

The Central New Jersey Council, Somerset, and neighboring counties, held a dinner meeting in March at which reports were heard from delegates to the Temple University Reading Institute. The meeting also featured an exhibit of the newest reading materials available.

The Bronx Reading Council, New York City, was greatly inspired by Miss Nancy Larrick's talk at the February meeting on "Reading in the Content Areas." The members have already incorporated many of her excellent ideas in their daily teaching.

The Long Island Council, New York, heard Dr. Roma Gans speak on

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"Motivating Children's Interests in Reading" at their February meeting. A dinner meeting has been planned for April at which Dr. Leland Jacobs will discuss "Children's Literature."

The Texas Southern University Council has held three very rewarding meetings this school year. The topics of discussion were: "Bridging the Gap between Elementary and Junior High School as it Relates to the Use of the Library," "Books for Christmas Reading," and "The Case For and Against Television and the Comics." Mr. Willis Brown, co-director of The Great Books Study Group at Texas Southern, will discuss "The Great Books Movement" at the April meeting.

The Illinois State Normal University Reading Council held a dinner

meeting for charter members in February. Plans for enlarging the Council were discussed. The first open meeting of this newly organized council will be held in April at which time Miss Ruth Zimmerman, children's librarian, will speak on "Don't You Have Any Good Books?"

The Preston County Council, Kingwood, West Virginia, has been directing its attention towards the development of an informal reading inventory at their meetings this year. Dr. Marjorie S. Johnson and Mr. Roy A. Kress, Jr., of Temple University, directed a workshop on Techniques for the Development and Use of the Individual and Group Inventories.

The Mohawk Valley Council, New York, is planning to hold an all-day

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*Edited by Dr. Emmett A. Betts
Betts Reading Clinic, Haverford, Pa.*

conference on reading in April. Among the speakers will be Dr. Ruth Strang of Teacher's College, Columbia University, Dr. William Sheldon of Syracuse University, and Dr. Linda Smith of Cortland State Teacher's College. A varied program including demonstrations at the primary, intermediate, and secondary level has been planned. Small group meetings, a movie, and a panel discussion will round out the day.

The Queensborough Council, New York City, held an open meeting on March 30 at which the topic for discussion was "The Forgotten Two-Thirds: The Average and Superior Readers." Following a keynote address by Dr. Nancy Young of the Bureau of Curriculum Research, the audience was invited to join discussion groups at the primary, intermediate, or junior high school level. Each group later presented its point of view to the entire gathering. The meeting had been planned to make use of the many excellent resources within the local group and to secure maximum audience participation.

The Indiana State Teachers College Council, Indiana, Pennsylvania, heard Miss Mabel Brown, teacher in the Horace Mann School at Indiana, give a most interesting and helpful talk on "Choral Reading" at their February meeting.

The Kanawha County Council, Charleston, West Virginia, sponsored a one-day Language Arts Conference at which Dr. William Sheldon, of Syracuse University, was the guest speaker. Their April meeting featured a demonstration of book reports on the

primary, intermediate, and secondary levels.

The Columbus Council, Ohio, has planned, for their spring meeting, a panel discussion on "How Can We Improve the Reading of Boys and Girls." Teachers from the various grade levels will participate in the discussion.

The Kent State Council, Ohio, holds monthly meetings from October through May. The programs included discussions of "The Gifted Child" by Dr. Dorothy Norris of the Cleveland Major Work Classes, "The Slow Learner" by Dr. Amy Allen, Ohio State Educational Department, and "Reading in the Secondary Schools" by Mrs. Evelyn Davidson, Kent State University reading specialist.

The Brooklyn Council, New York, met in January for a tea-time social after which the reading consultants presented a program on ways and means of improving reading skills. A lively discussion followed. At the final meeting in May, the librarians will play an active part.

Western Michigan College Council, Kalamazoo, Michigan, has been meeting monthly with the exception of December. "Developing Background as a Means of Increasing Reading Ability" was the topic for discussion in March. The topic for consideration in April is "Some Questions Asked by Parents Concerning the Teaching of Reading." "Some Problems of the Remedial Teacher" will be discussed at the May meeting.

The newly organized Staten Island Council, New York, has adopted the policy of "learning by doing" rather

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than "passive assimilation." This year the one hundred thirty-four members have concerned themselves with methods and materials in reading. At the March meeting the members shared with each other techniques and devices found to be effective in teaching word attack skills. At the April meeting, a panel of members presented highlights of what research had to say about "word attack skills" with the entire membership asking questions and commenting on the topic. The topic for the May meeting is "Reading—A Thinking Process."

The Arizona State College Council, Tempe, Arizona, participated in the annual Reading and Language Arts Conference held at the College on March eighteenth and nineteenth. The Council was responsible for a discussion on "Practical Applications for the Reading Program" at one of the group meetings.

The Toronto and District Council, Ontario, Canada, has seven hundred fifty members this year. In February, under the direction of Dr. Russell Stauffer, director of the Reading Clinic at the University of Delaware, seventy of the members attended a two-day special Primary Workshop which they found to be very inspiring. The March meeting was a panel discussion on "Are We Making Progress in the Teaching of Reading?" The April meeting will be held during their Easter vacation as part of the program of the Ontario Education Association. Dr. Ethel Maney, Reading Clinic, Temple University, will conduct a question and answer period on "Problems in Developmental Reading."

The Suffolk Reading Council, Bay Shore, New York, meets monthly from October through June. Membership and attendance at these two-hour meetings make a teacher eligible for two points of in-service credit. At the February meeting, children from the primary, intermediate, and junior-high grades participated in a demonstration of supplementary reading activities through group story-writing, dramatization, television, radio, newspaper, etc. At the March meeting, a workshop was conducted on the speed approach to the teaching of reading. At the April meeting, experiments, methods, discoveries, etc., carried on or encountered by members, since the council was organized, will be discussed. The present membership is two hundred and fifty.

The Gerald A. Yoakam Council, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, held a panel discussion in February on "The Techniques of Outlining." A teacher from the primary, the intermediate, and the secondary grades very ably presented the techniques for her grade level. The Council will be host to the members of the Annual Assembly Meeting which will be held in Pittsburgh in May.

A three-week workshop on *The Teaching of Reading in the Secondary School* will be conducted by Hardy R. Finch, English chairman of Greenwich (Conn.) High School at Marshall College, Huntington, West Virginia, from June 27 to July 15. Three points of undergraduate or graduate credit will be given for workshop participation.

Vote Now for New Reading Council Officers

Each member of the International Council for the Improvement of Reading Instruction is entitled to vote for new Council Officers.

According to the constitution, a President-Elect is chosen each year. At the end of the year, he automatically becomes President of the I.C.I.R.I. Dr. William S. Gray, President-Elect for 1954-55, will become president for the year 1955-56.

The outgoing President remains a member of the Executive Board for the year following his term as president. Thus, Miss Margaret A. Robinson, President for 1954-55, will serve

on the Board for the year 1955-56. Two new Board members are elected each year.

The following ballot is drawn up in accordance with the regulations of the I.C.I.R.I. Ballots should be mailed at once to Dr. Albert J. Harris, Queens College, Flushing, New York, so as to reach his office before May 1, 1955.

The names of the candidates chosen by this ballot will be presented by the elections committee at the annual meeting of the assembly to be held at the University of Pittsburgh on May 7, 1955.

Names of additional candidates for office may be written in

FOR PRESIDENT-ELECT

(Vote for one)

☐ Miss Nancy Larrick
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New York 17, New York

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Betts Reading Clinic
257 West Montgomery Avenue
Haverford, Pennsylvania

☐ Dr. Muriel Potter
Michigan State Normal College
Ypsilanti, Michigan

☐ Dr. William D. Sheldon, Director
Reading Clinic
University of Syracuse
Syracuse 10, New York

☐
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Index to Volume 8

(By Title and Author)

- Abraham, Willard, 153
- Appraisal of Growth in Reading, 35-38
- Approaches to Basal Reading Instruction, 13-18
- Artley, A. Sterl, 21, 67, 196
- Barbe, Walter B., 107
- Betts, Emmett A., 8
- Bland, Phyllis, 146
- Burrows, Alvina Treut, 39
- Can We Improve Reading by Using Mechanical Devices, 219-223
- Cansler, Gleamon, 73
- Carter, Homer L. J., 165
- Challenge Versus Frustration in Basic Reading, 8-13
- Child and His Basic Reading Materials, The, 30-34
- Children's Books and the Teaching of Reading, 56-57, 125-126
- Classroom Libraries Are Not Enough, 215-219
- Cleland, Donald L., 134
- Cockerille, Clara E., 43
- Comments on Dr. Artley's Address, 200-201
- Controversial Issues Relating to Reading (an introduction), 195
- Controversial Issues Relating to Reading in the Curricular Areas, 208-211
- Controversial Issues Relating to Word Perception, 196-199
- Developmental Reading in Schools and Colleges, 131-133
- Direct versus Incidental Teaching of Reading beyond the Primary Grades, 202-206
- Durrell, Donald D., 25
- Dye, Myrtle S., 107
- Elinsky, Dolores, 227
- Estabrook, Dorothy C., 140
- Experiencing Gives Meaning to Reading, 107-112
- Farrell, Mary E., 227
- Faye, Leo C., 68
- Friedman, Bertha B., 183
- Getting Acquainted with Words, 95-99
- Gray, William S., 195
- High School Developmental Reading Program, A, 146-152
- Hildreth, Gertrude, 95
- Horn, Ernest, 212
- How Shall We Develop the Reading Abilities Demanded of the Content Areas, 78-81
- Huus, Helen, 90
- Improving Basal Reading Instruction, 3
- Improving Reading in the Content Areas, 67
- Interesting Books for the Reading Teacher, 183-187
- I.C.I.R.I. Is Growing, 59
- It Pays to Get Ready to Read, 224-226, 237
- Johnson, Eleanor M., 224

- Kottmeyer, William, 202
- Krarup, Agnes, 215
- Lansdown, Brenda, 113
- Larrick, Nancy, 56, 125, 245
- Lohmann, Victor, 78
- Making Provision for the Varying Levels of Reading Ability Within the Content Areas, 82-89
- McCracken, Glenn, 100
- McGinnis, Dorothy J., 165
- Message from the President, A, 62
- News of Local Councils, 63-64, 126-127, 189-190, 249-253
- Owens, Anne C., 13
- Parents Learn about First-Grade Reading, 227-233
- Penn, M. Dorothy, 227
- Place of Phonics in Basal Reading Instruction, The, 18-20, 38
- Place of Recreatory and Related Reading in the Content Areas, The, 90-94
- Potter, Muriel, 50, 119, 178, 239
- Prevention of Reading Disabilities as a Basal Reading Problem, 21-24, 38
- Problem of Identification in Learning to Read, The, 113-115
- Readiness for Reading in the Content Areas, 73-77
- Reading as a Source of the Ideal Self, 159-164
- Reading in Second Grade Can Be Rewarding and Enjoyable, 140-145
- Reading in the Science Field, 245-247
- Reading Problems Among College Students, 153-158
- Reply to Dr. Kottmeyer's Address, 206-207
- Responsibility for the Development of Reading Skills Needed in Content Areas, 212-213
- Robinson, Helen M., 46, 116, 173, 200, 235
- Robinson, Margaret A., 62
- Sheldon, William D., 219
- Significance of Developmental Reading Skills, The, 134-140
- Stauffer, Russell G., 82
- Systematic Instruction in Basic Reading Skills, 4-7
- Tinker, Miles A., 35
- Tronsberg, Josephine, 18, 63, 126, 189, 249
- Vocabulary Control — More or Less? 25-29
- Weingarten, Samuel, 159
- We Must Modernize Reading Instruction, 100-106
- What Is Basic in Reading Instruction? 39-43
- What Other Magazines Are Saying About the Teaching of Reading, 50-55, 61; 119-124, 178-182, 239-244
- What Research Says to the Teacher of Reading, 46-49, 116-118, 173-177, 191; 235-237
- Where Shall We Start in Reading? 43-45
- Whipple, Gertrude, 30, 208
- Why John Hated Reading, 165-171
- Witty, Paul, 131, 206
- Yoakam, Gerald A., 3, 4

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